■ SPORTS / A17
Executive order to transfer Philippine Sports Commission to Department of Health

■ NEWS / A2
Arrested Oakwood mutineers Awol for a total of 7 escapees

■ BUSINESS / B1
BSP says threats to economy remain, cites high oil prices, inflation

■ METRO / A15
Ex-PNP officer Jaylo wanted but won't surrender, says lawyer

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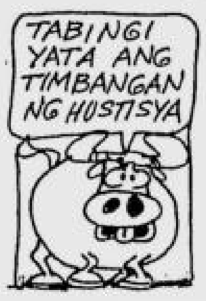
PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, January 26, 2006 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 49 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Ex-treasurer gets 17 years over missing P26,000 in 1976


TABINGI YATA ANG TIMBANGAN NG HUSTISYA

By Nelson F. Flores

FOR JUST P25,960 IN unaccounted public funds, a 72-year-old former municipal treasurer of Lamut, Ifugao, has been sentenced to 17 years in prison.

Ironically, for allegedly misusing P728 million in

EX-TREASURER/ A4

People's champion arrives Friday; first stop, Palace

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Tina G. Santos

AFTER DAZZLING PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARroyo with his boxing prowess, Manny Pacquiao is making sure his main political patron gets to know his emerging talent—singing.

Conrado "Dodie" Limcauco, Cabinet officer for presidential events, said Malacañang expected Pacquiao to give Ms Arroyo a copy of his multi-

PEOPLE'S/ A6

Head of Palace guards replaced

But GMA courts soldiers with P1.5-B release for their housing

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Dona Pazzibugan and TJ Burgonio

AMID YET ANOTHER THREAT of a coup d'etat, President Macapagal-Arroyo is replacing the head of the Presidential Security Group (PSG) even as she courts the support of the military with promises of housing benefits.

The lack of housing facilities for soldiers was one of the grievances raised by rebel soldiers in the 2003 failed coup.

The departure of Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit as PSG chief could be a sign that paranoia has set in in Malacañang following the escape of Magdalo officers who staged a failed coup in 2003, a military analyst said yesterday

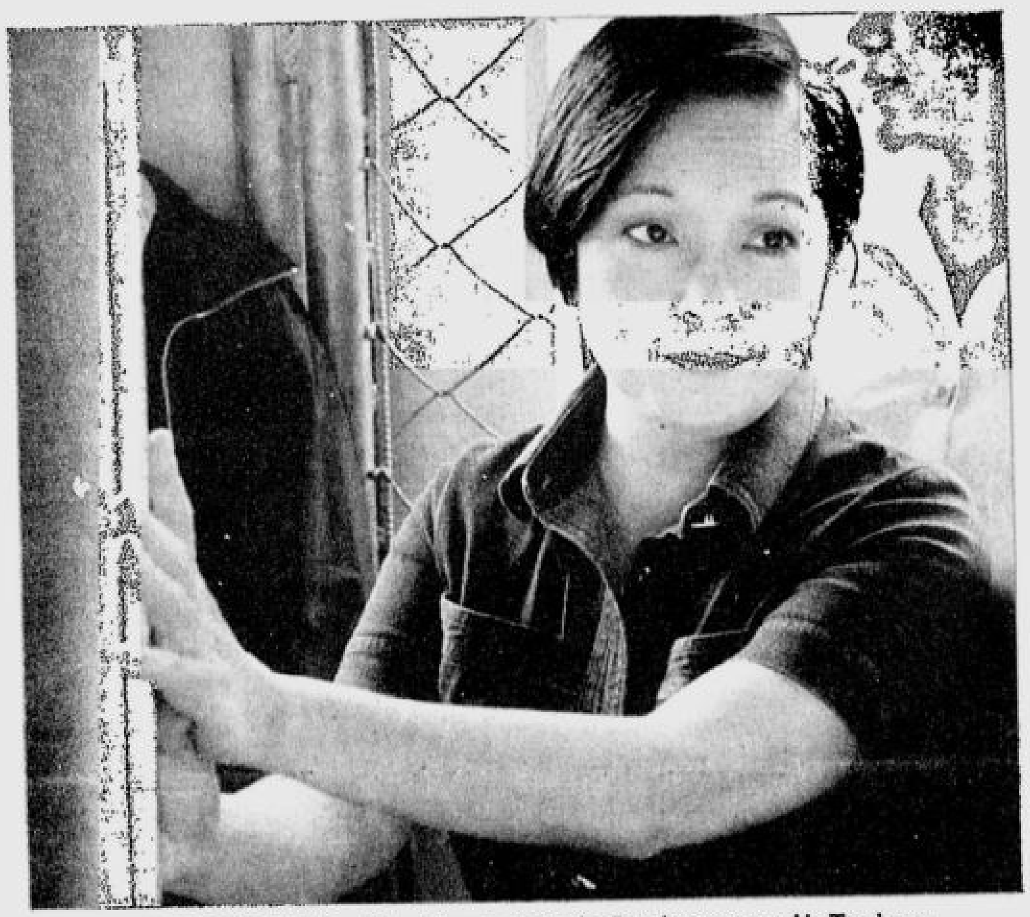
"My theory is that Gloria is getting paranoid. How could you not be paranoid with all the things that you're doing and with all the pressure that you're facing?" said the military analyst, who asked not to be named for obvious reasons.

The analyst, a former military officer, said Bangit's departure could have been prompted by a security lapse, and not by questions on his loyalty.

"He's a very loyal person. Probably, he wasn't able to insulate the close-in security from contamination by the rebel military group," he said.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales disclosed last week another assassination plot against the President, which he

HEAD/ A4



CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE: President Arroyo visits the Parola compound in Tondo on Wednesday for an interaction with the poor residents and local representatives there. She steps outside the barangay hall to hold the meeting closer to the overflow crowd. LYN RILLON

No-El alive after all; Palace says no consensus on issue

By Christine O. Avendaño, Armand N. Nocum and TJ Burgonio

"NO-EL" IS NOT DEAD, AFTER ALL.

Malacañang yesterday clarified that the Council of State had yet to come up with a consensus on whether the 2007 election should be scrapped because those present at the meeting on Tuesday did not go to the extent of voting for the proposal.

To emphasize the point, the Palace released a communique of the Council of State, detailing the issues that were agreed upon by the body, which did not include the no-election proposal.

In his weekly news conference, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said he did not recall hearing any debate on whether the 2007 election should be held or scrapped.

"There was no consensus because [the issue] was not thrown to the floor ... " Ermita

NO-EL/ A6

NO REGRETS on her 73rd birthday, including not attending the Council of State meeting, ex-President Cory Aquino hears Mass with her family at the Christ the King Parish at San Isidro Pamplona, Las Piñas City, where she also visited her microfinance project beneficiaries. JESS YUSON

Cory says too much focus on Charter change

By Cynthia Balana

THE WOMAN WHO CREATED the Council of State in 1987 said she had no regrets about not attending the council meeting called by President Macapagal-Arroyo on Tuesday.

Former President Corazon Aquino, who celebrated her 73rd birthday yesterday, formed the council to advise the incumbent President on pressing issues that impact on the national welfare.

"I just heard what Sen. Kiko Pangilinan had said. He was saying that he thought more issues would have been addressed. I supposed there was much focus on Charter change," Aquino said.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, who was present at the meeting, lamented that the executive order creating the council was meant to be "an advi-

CORY/ A4

Pope's first encyclical: Back to basics and love

VATICAN CITY—POPE BENEDICT XVI on Wednesday said in his first encyclical that the Roman Catholic Church had no desire to govern states or set public policy, but at the same time could not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.

In the long-awaited document "God is Love," Benedict explored the relationship between God's love for mankind and the Church's works of charity, saying the two were intrinsically linked and form the foundation of the Christian faith.

The 71-page encyclical, eagerly watched for clues about Benedict's major concerns, will likely characterize his early pontificate as one in which he sought to re-

POPE'S / A6

Miriam scores; VFA office abolished

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PRESIdential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom) appears headed to losing his office a day after he warned against the proposed junking of the controversial agreement.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has decided to abolish the commission because it "duplicates" the functions of the bicameral Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA (Lovfa), Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said yesterday.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo also indicated that Zosimo Paredes—the most often quoted official of the commission since the alleged rape of a Filipino woman by a group of US Marines last Nov. 1—could not speak in behalf of the administration on the VFA.

"[Ms Arroyo] is convinced that [the VFACom] is redundant because it duplicates the work of the Lovfa, and it requires an appropriation of P20 million a year," Santiago said, adding:

"And from what law school did he (Paredes) graduate? He does not know his law."

But the commission, which is under the Office of the President, runs on a budget of P2 million a year drawn from that office, Paredes said.

Santiago, who cochairs the Lovfa along with Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco and who has recommended the termination and renegotiation of the VFA, also said Paredes was "publicly reprimanded" by Romulo during the Senate hearing on the budget of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

"He was told to stop making comments be-

MIRIAM/ A6

'Hello Garci' probe began with a bang, ended in a whimper

By Michael Lim Ubac

AFTER EIGHT MONTHS AND 14 HEARINGS, the most celebrated inquiry in the history of the House of Representatives closed yesterday without closure, with the truth still up in the air, according to lawmakers.

Virgilio Garcillano—star witness and protagonist in the "Hello Garci" mystery—offered no clue whatsoever on the political mystery that nearly unseated President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Garcillano said on the last day of the joint

HELLO/ A4

EDWIN BACASMAS

AS USUAL, Garcillano's answers raise more questions at the final wiretapping hearing at the House like his passport being checked out (at right) by minority lawmakers like Darlene Custodio, Gilbert Remulla and Joel Villanueva. No closure at the close of the inquiry.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: At 2 p.m. yesterday, an active low pressure area was estimated at 250 km West of Coron, Palawan. There will be moderate to occasionally strong easterly to northeasterly surface windflow over Luzon.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/01/26/06

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	**Gen. Santos**	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	**Zamboanga**	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	**Cagayan de Oro**	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	**Davao**	Partly Cloudy

Another Oakwood mutineer is missing

A SEVENTH JUNIOR OFFICER LINKED TO the July 27, 2003 Oakwood mutiny has gone missing, according to the Philippine Army.

Army 2nd Lt. Angelbert Gay, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class 2000, went AWOL [absent without official leave] last Jan. 6 and was dropped from the rolls 10 days later.

Gay and 70 other junior Army officers were charged with gross misconduct after their names appeared in a diskette allegedly recovered from the Oakwood Premier hotel at the Ayala Center, scene of the failed 2003 mutiny. They were not detained but were placed instead under the custody of their respective units.

"He was dropped from the rolls on Jan. 16. We have no information if he has linked up with the other escapees," Army spokesman Maj. Bartolome Bacarro said.

Gay went missing more than a week before four other Army junior officers implicated in the Oakwood mutiny – Capt. Nathaniel Rabonza, 1st Lts. Lawrence San Juan, Sonny Sarmiento and Patricio Bumidang Jr. – escaped from a high-security detention facility in Fort Bonifacio on the night of Jan. 17.

Last Tuesday, Army 2nd Lt. Aldrin Baldonado declared in a statement that he, too, had escaped from the Custodial Management Unit last Jan. 18 after he was arrested and detained for being allegedly part of a coup d'etat plot.

Last Dec. 14, Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon, one of the alleged ring leaders of the Oakwood mutiny, slipped past his military escorts after a hearing at the Makati Regional Trial Court where he and the others were being tried on coup d'etat charges.

The escape of the "Magdalo" rebel officers has triggered fresh speculation of a planned coup d'etat, and the top military brass said early this week that such a plot actually existed.

Gay last reported to his assigned unit, the Army Headquarters and Headquarters Support Group [G1] just before the Christmas holidays, according to Bacarro. He said Gay had previously gone AWOL from Oct. 20 to Nov. 7 last year.

Meanwhile, the Army denied Baldonado's claim that he was arrested and detained last Jan. 18.

According to Bacarro, Baldonado had gone AWOL on Jan.5 but reported back on Jan. 16 and was "called for investigation" on Jan. 18 but went AWOL again.

"He has incriminated himself," said Bacarro, referring to Baldonado's admission that he had linked up with the four escaped Magdalo rebels.

Comelec turns to Indian technology

By Jerome Aning

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS IS turning to Indian technology in its renewed quest to acquire automated voting and counting machines for next year's mid-term polls.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. seemed impressed with the demonstration mounted yesterday by India's chief elections commissioner B.B. Tandon who showed the simplicity of the Indian electronic voting and counting machines.

"This demonstration gives us an idea as to what technology we can adopt for our modernization," Abalos said.

Commissioner Resurreccion Borra said the Indian machines and the latest election systems would be showcased in a "vendors' fair" that the Comelec and the International Foundation for Election Systems would be conducting in the next few weeks.

But Borra said the election modernization law, RA 8436, would have to be amended first as it only provides for voting with the use of ballots.

Tandon and another Indian election commissioner, Rajesh Aggarwal, brought with them several models of voting and counting machines that were used in India's last parliamentary and local elections.

The suitcase-sized Indian machines are battery-powered and made of plastic. The ballot-free voting machine featured a column of buttons, one for each candidate, that a voter needed only to press.

The voting machine is connected to a counting machine that keeps track of the number of votes cast and the votes racked up by each candidate.

The vote tally is stored in a chip inside the counting machine. This can be read for confirmation by the main counting machine.

Five polling personnel and party watchers would be needed to oversee the voting process in each precinct. They are the ones who would place the sticker seals on the machines to protect against tampering.

Aggarwal said his country was forced to turn to election automation in 1977 when India suffered a severe paper shortage. Two state-run science firms developed and patented the machines.

He said automation proved vital to the election system in India, which now has more than 787 million voters.

Tandon said it took 10 years for the Indian government to convince skeptical politicians, the media and the public of the machines' reliability.

GMA orders crackdown on smuggling

By Armand N. Nocum and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS ORDERED the Department of Justice to prosecute big-time smugglers and secure their conviction amid reports that Vicky Toh, who is allegedly romantically linked to First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, is involved in smuggling.

In an interview, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the President has been persistently egging him to send suspected big-time smugglers to jail.

"Every time there's a Cabinet meeting, the President always asks: 'How many cases have you filed against suspected smugglers, how many have been convicted,'" he said.

"She has been waiting for conviction. She's not very interested in the case filed, but on what had been successfully prosecuted," he added.

Not keen on Toh

Gonzalez also said he had discussed the matter with Finance Secretary Margarito Teves in a meeting Tuesday.

But a Palace official, however, said Malacañang is not too keen on delving deeper into the smuggling allegations raised by one of President's supporters against Toh and her brother Tommy.

"I don't see why Malacañang should give special effort to find out whether anyone is involved in smuggling or not," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in a briefing in Malacañang.

"We will just have to monitor the results of the investigation in the Senate or what will come out of the hearings," Ermita said.

Grilled by Senate

On Tuesday, newly-appointed Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales was grilled at the Senate regarding the alleged smuggling activities of a businessmen close to Toh and as well as Puregold Duty Free owner Lucio Lao Co, who is said to be close to the First Family.

Senators led by Senate President Franklin Drilon initiated the probe following reports that Toh's associates were reportedly smuggling luxury cars, cellphones, electronic items, garments, foodstuffs and other highly dutiable goods.

Morales told senators that he had already ordered Customs Deputy Commissioner Celso Templo to look into the matter and if evidence warrants, file charges against all those involved.

Should Toh be one of those charged with smuggling, Gonzalez assured that he would act independently on the matter.

"My closeness with the President has nothing to do with my job," he said. "We will make the decision based on the evidence they have."

But he advised customs officials to make their charges stick.

"I hope the (BOC) would file cases supported by credible evidence because there were many cases filed by customs which were all withdrawn," he said, noting that some customs men do not even appear in the hearings of those cases.

Not properly prepared

He said that not only were cases not backed by evidence, but some do not even have the names of respondents. He said some cases were "not properly prepared."

"It's easy to announce the filing of a case against big names ... but hard to prove their culpability," he said.

Recalling that the BOC had issued an "order of battle" against about 200 big-time smugglers, Gonzalez said those orders would be of no importance if there is no evidence against them.

Navy gets 2 new vessels

THE PHILIPPINE NAVY IS TO RECEIVE two high-speed vessels from South Korea this year that will be used to help patrol the country's porous borders, a spokesman said yesterday.

The transfer was part of an agreement to boost defense ties between the two countries. Six vessels were also acquired in the late 1990s, said Navy spokesman Captain Geronimo Malabanan.

The new patrol vessels will be used by the navy's Stingray task force, a rapid deployment force for counter-terrorism and anti-insurgency operations, he said. *AFP*

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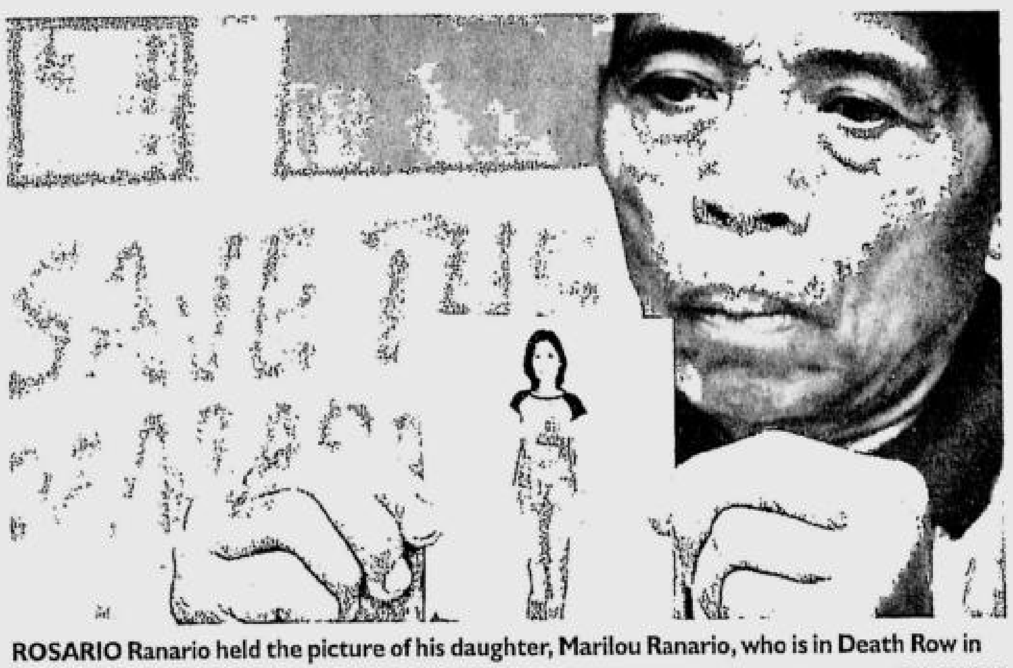

ROSARIO Ranario held the picture of his daughter, Marilou Ranario, who is in Death Row in Kuwait.

JOAN BONDOC

DOLE to assist doomed Pinay

By Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMployment will provide the necessary welfare and humanitarian assistance to a Filipina domestic helper facing capital punishment in Kuwait.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said the Philippine Overseas Labor Office would assist Marilou Labao Ranario while the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration would attend to the needs of the worker's family here.

DOLE's move followed President Macapagal-Arroyo's order for an all-out effort to save Ranario from being beheaded.

Ranario, 33, a native of Carigara, Leyte, was sentenced to death by the Criminal Court of First Instance of Kuwait on Sept. 28 last year for stabbing her employer to death in January that same year.

Sto. Tomas said diyyah or blood money had been offered in accordance with Muslim law to save Ranario, but this was turned down by the victim's family.

A separate appeal before the Court of Appeals at the Justice Palace of Kuwait is being pursued by two Kuwaiti defense lawyers hired by the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait.

Philippine Labor Attache to Kuwait Leopoldo de Jesus said another hearing on the appeal was set on Feb. 11.

Sto. Tomas said POLO-Kuwait, which De Jesus heads, and the Philippine Embassy have been coordinating to ensure that the fullest possible legal assistance, consistent with the Muslim Shari'ah law, was extended to Ranario.

As this developed, at least 14 overseas Filipino workers facing the death penalty in the Middle East may be saved through the payment of blood money.

The Department of Foreign Affairs asked Congress yesterday to allocate funds for this purpose.

While the DFA gets a regular budget for legal assistance extended to distressed OFWs as provided for under the 1995 Migrant Workers Act, it is not authorized to use the fund as blood money or diyyah, a DFA official explained.

In a budget hearing yesterday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo asked the Senate to review the MWA to have this "legal cap" removed, DFA spokesman Gilberto Asuque told DFA reporters.

The law allows the legal assistance funds to be used only for hiring lawyers, posting bail and paying court fees and other litigation expenses, Asuque added.

The lives of up to seven OFWs earlier condemned to die in some Muslim countries were spared upon acceptance of diyyah by the family of their victims. While Philippine diplomats mainly handle the negotiations, the money is actually sourced from private donors.

With Volt Contreras

Gov't hands off imperiled Piatco deal

THE DEAL BETWEEN THE GERMAN-based Fraport airport operator and Manila Hotel Corp. on the sale of the former's stake in the Naia Terminal 3 should not affect plans to open and operate the terminal this year, officials said.

The transaction between Fraport and the Manila Hotel for the Fraport's stake in the Philippine International Air Terminals Co., the consortium that won the contract to build the terminal, was a private deal that should not involve the government, said Thompson Lantion, spokesperson of the Department of Transportation and Communications.

Lantion said it was up to the two private parties to resolve the issue.

"Any legal issues concerning the two groups, the government has no part in it," the DOTC spokesperson said.

The DOTC plans to open the mothballed Naia Terminal 3 for operation within the next six months.

Late last year, the Manila Hotel said Fraport had accepted its offer to buy the latter's 61 percent stake in Piatco for $200 million.

It also said it had acquired the combined 20 percent interest of Sojitz Corp. and SB Airport Investment Corp. in Piatco for $30 million.

Press reports the other day said however that the buy-out of Fraport's Piatco stake may not push through after all.

But Manila Hotel president Jose Lina, who was elected Piatco president last year, said the company's position on the issue had not changed.

Fraport has asked the World Bank's International Center for Settlement for Investment Disputes to settle a dispute over compensation after the terminal was seized by the government in December 2004. The government has rejected its demand for $425 in compensation.

Piatco itself has sought arbitration action from the Singapore-based International Chamber of Commerce for its demand for reimbursement from the government of the $525 million it claims to have invested in Terminal 3.

The Supreme Court had voided the contract between the government and Piatco, saying the amendments made to the original contract were illegal.

A DOTC executive said the only issue the could delay the opening of Naia 3 in the first semester of 2006 would be construction-related.

Alfonso Cusi, the general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority, said last month that completion work at Terminal 3 would be concluded by the first quarter and that barring any legal hitches, the new terminal would be opened by the second quarter.

The business community said the opening of the terminal was crucial to the credibility of the Arroyo administration. Naia 3 is designed to handle 28 aircraft at once and 13 million passengers a year.

After the takeover, the government announced that it would open Naia 3, which has the capability to handle 28 aircraft at one time and 13 million passengers a year, by June 21.

But a slow-moving deal with Takenaka, the Japanese building contractor, and the unresolved issue of compensation to the Piatco consortium delayed those plans.

The whole issue has been complicated by a bid by the Asia's Emerging Dragon Corp. led by ethnic Chinese tycoon Lucio Tan. *Clarissa S. Batino*

LETTER OF APPEAL

Erap seeks bishops' intervention on case

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE of the Philippines is considering an appeal by former President Joseph Estrada for it to intervene in the plunder case against him, a senior prelate said yesterday, as the Sandiganbayan, in a move to expedite the five-year-old trial, gave the toppled leader's attorneys up to the middle of next month to present their remaining witnesses.

Estrada had written a "humble letter of appeal" to the bishops, and the CBCP would take it up when it holds an annual plenary at the Pope Pius XII Catholic Center in Manila later this week, Archbishop Oscar Quevedo told reporters.

"We will take it into consideration. It will be considered," said Quevedo, archbishop of Cotabato and a former CBCP president. "I am sure that in fairness the letter will be taken into consideration. I do not think they (bishops) will throw this in the wastebasket."

While the Church hierarchy does not have a say in judicial matters, it is a political force in this largely Roman Catholic nation and played an active role in Estrada's ouster in 2001 over allegations of widespread corruption in his government.

'Truth shall prevail'

"I hope that the truth shall eventually give me back my freedom," Agence France-Presse quoted Estrada as saying in his letter to the bishops.

The ex-president asked the bishops to provide "a moral and detached assessment" of his case, the AFP report added.

ESTRADA

No other details were immediately available on the nature of the intervention Estrada wanted from the bishops. He has been repeatedly asking the Sandiganbayan to grant him bail or allow him to be confined at his home in Greenhills, San Juan instead of being detained at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal.

Meanwhile, the Special Division gave Estrada's lawyers until Feb. 15 to complete the presentation of their remaining witnesses after which they should also set a date when to put Estrada on the witness stand.

The court's decision to set a deadline for the presentation of the remaining defense witnesses was in response to a motion filed by the prosecution after repeated cancellations of scheduled hearings because of the absence of witnesses.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, who had charged that Estrada's lawyers were deliberately dragging out the case, said he was happy with the deadline.

Long way off

However, Villa-Ignacio said the case's conclusion may still be a long way off.

"We are expecting more surprises from them," he said.

Former Sen. Rene Saguisag, one of Estrada's lawyers, said he would file a motion asking the court to reconsider its denial last Tuesday of a bail petition filed by Estrada.

Saguisag said the planned new motion would insist that Estrada be allowed to go to his Polk Street residence in Greenhills to enable him to adequately prepare for his testimony.

He said holding Estrada at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center would violate his constitutional right to due process since that place has a "chilling effect" on Estrada, his lawyers and potential witnesses.

In denying Estrada's bail petition, the court said he could choose between continued detention in Tanay or be moved to the VMMC in Quezon City while he prepared to testify. *AFP with a report from Nelson F. Flores*

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13 injured in 3 NLEx accidents

THIRTEEN PEOPLE WERE HURT IN THREE vehicular accidents along different sections of the southbound lane of the North Luzon Expressway yesterday.

A report from the traffic control center of the Manila North Tollways Corp. said the accidents along the Sta. Rita and Pulilan sections of the NLEx in Bulacan were due to slippery roads caused by strong rains dumped by Tropical Depression Agaton.

The vehicles, all of them bound for Metro Manila, lost control and hit the rear bumpers of the vehicles they were tailing.

The injured were taken to the Bulacan Provincial Hospital in the City of Malolos.

As of 4:30 p.m., the center said it had not received any report that an injured victim had died.

The first accident involved a 10-wheel truck and a Genesis bus. A six-wheel truck and a Bataan bus figured in the second collision.

The third incident involved an Isuzu Elf truck, a Ford Everest and a six-wheel truck. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

First Quarter Storm marks 36th year today

THE FQS MOVEMENT, UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION of the activists of the 1960s and 1970s, spearheads today the 36th anniversary commemoration of the historic Philippine phenomenon known as the First Quarter Storm.

FQS and present-day activists will present a program in front of the National Museum along P. Burgos Avenue in Manila at 10 a.m.

The program will be highlighted by the unveiling of a mural—to be on display until 5 p.m.—depicting the tumultuous events that marked the FQS activists' baptism of fire in their struggle against the Marcos regime.

Among the speakers at the unveiling rites are Dr. Bienvenido Lumbera, an FQS veteran and eminent literary figure; Bonifacio Ilagan, chair of the FQS Movement; and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza,

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Head of Palace guards replaced as GMA woos AFP

From page A1

said could be carried out by the opposition, the Magdalo group or communist rebels.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the transfer of Bangit to another unit had nothing to do with threats against the President.

"If the threat against the President was really that serious, I think we will not make any move to remove General Bangit because we are depending on him," said Ermita at a briefing in Malacañang.

Important position

"If General Bangit will be getting out of PSG, he has to occupy an important position, which will be good for his professional advancement," Ermita said.

Citing an INQUIRER report that over a third of the 154 generals are scheduled to retire this year, the executive secretary said Bangit was being considered to fill one of these posts.

"It's misleading to say he resigned or he is being kicked out of assignment. He is just being transferred," the executive secretary said.

Sharing Ermita's view on the transfer of Bangit, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former national police chief, said Bangit's departure from the PSG was nothing but a career move.

"My information is that he actually wanted out in order to pursue his own career advancement. He's also reportedly tired and pressured as PSG commander," Lacson said in a text message.

Lacson said Bangit's new assignment as deputy commander of the Philippine Army's 2nd Division was a field assignment and therefore a step toward that direction. "I don't see any other significance in the transfer," he said.

Surprise visit

In a surprise visit yesterday to Camp Aguinaldo, the general headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Ms Arroyo announced that she was authorizing the release of P1.5 billion for housing projects for soldiers.

Accompanied by newly designated presidential chief of staff Mike Defensor, Ms Arroyo went to the condominium project near the Logistics Command compound, which was inaugurated last week.

"It was a surprise visit," the AFP vice chief of staff, Vice Admiral Ariston de los Reyes, said.

The last time the President was at Camp Aguinaldo was during the AFP anniversary last Dec. 21 when she promised to release P5 billion for the Philippine Defense Reform Program.

It was not the first time that Ms Arroyo announced housing benefits for soldiers.

Shortly after the failed coup in 2003, she addressed the housing problem of soldiers through the conversion of the 34-hectare Navy Golf Course inside Fort Bonifacio into a housing project.

Spurned

Ms Macapagal said that this was separate from the lands earlier set aside for housing, which would provide affordable homes to some 75,000 soldiers.

Ms Arroyo's apparent attempt to court the soldiers' favor was spurned by some officers.

"No amount of benefits, which are due to the soldiers anyway, can erase the fact that our senior commanders bastardized themselves by allowing themselves to be used in the last elections," said a senior military officer, who asked not to be named.

The visit to Camp Aguinaldo came a day after the AFP top brass disclosed an ongoing recruitment among junior officers for a coup d'etat.

The AFP leadership believes there is an "orchestrated" plot to unseat Ms Arroyo, which includes the Jan. 17 escape of four Magdalo officers from a high-security detention facility inside the Army headquarters in Fort Bonifacio.

In an interview over ANC cable news channel on Tuesday, 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan, one of the escapees, said rebel soldiers were just waiting for "the right time and the right signal" to oust the President.

At his briefing, Ermita called on the junior officers engaging in military adventurism, specifically the Magdalo officers who had escaped, to reconsider their position and stop venting their ire on the President through the media.

"I'm surprised why they act like that. I don't know whether those things are taught in the academy. They might have the conviction but they are too young to pass judgment, especially on superior officials of government," Ermita said.

Ex-Isafp chief

Only De los Reyes and incoming AFP Western Command [Wescom] chief Rear Admiral Tirso Danga were on hand to receive the President yesterday.

Danga, the outgoing deputy chief of staff for intelligence, was head of the Intelligence Service of the AFP at the time of the wiretapping of the conversations between Ms Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, which indicated that Ms Arroyo rigged the 2004 presidential election.

"She did not give instructions. The President looked around and she promised to release P1.5 billion for housing projects for our soldiers," De los Reyes said. "It was a quick visit."

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga was in Brunei yesterday, according to De los Reyes.

Other Camp Aguinaldo-based officials were unaware of the President's visit.

Where's money coming from?

The AFP public information office was not able to confirm the visit until long after the presidential convoy had left the camp.

De los Reyes, who heads the AFP housing board, said Ms Arroyo did not say when the funds would be made available.

He said he had no idea where the P1.5 billion would come from, considering the government's fiscal problems.

Ms Arroyo proceeded to Camp Aguinaldo after visiting the wake of Air Force Capt. Aniano Amatong Jr. at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City shortly before noon. Amatong died in a plane crash on Wednesday.

'Hello Garci' probe began with a bang, ended in a whimper

From page A1

House inquiry that despite his effort to help "ferret out the truth," he was aware that his detractors were not buying his story.

"That's why I am here, to tell the truth," the former election commissioner said during the three-hour hearing. "It's up to them if they will believe me."

The 68-year-old Garcillano offered nothing new on his third appearance at the inquiry into the alleged bugging of his conversation with Ms Arroyo.

The opposition said the recordings were evidence Ms Arroyo manipulated the 2004 presidential election.

But Garcillano maintained there was nothing to support opposition allegations that he fixed the results to give Ms Arroyo a million-vote lead over his nearest rival, the late movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.

He had admitted during a previous appearance that he talked by phone with Ms Arroyo on May 24, 2004, but he said this was long after the certificates of canvass had been sent to Congress for official tallying.

Garcillano said that he had listened to a portion of the supposed wiretap but that he could not say if the voice caught there was his. He said he was not an audio expert.

Ms Arroyo has apologized for talking with an election official but has denied any wrongdoing. Last September, her allies in the House killed an impeachment attempt against her.

Last-ditch attempt

Opposition lawmakers made a last-ditch attempt to establish that Garcillano had fled the country after the wiretapping scandal broke out last July—an action regarded as evidence of guilt. But they offered no proof other than the Singapore's diplomatic note purporting to show that Garcillano stopped in the city-state en route to London on July 14.

Garcillano had submitted his two passports—one current and another expired—but there was nothing there to indicate he had left the country.

He had denied he had gone abroad, saying he had been in hiding for fear of his life and had spent his time on the run reading and writing his memoirs.

He reappeared last year, just after the inquiry panels had written a draft report initially pointing to a massive government cover-up. Administration lawmakers had insisted that the whole episode was merely part of an opposition attempt to oust Ms Arroyo.

"I did my best ... worked hard to defend Comelec," said Garcillano, who appeared with another Commission on Election commissioner, Florentino Tuason. "Now, I just want to go home to my wife."

Immigration records

Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golez demanded that Bureau of Immigration records showing that Garcillano had travelled be presented to the House.

Bukidnon Rep. Teofisto Guingona III raised the issue of a Comelec decision promulgated last Aug. 31 which bore Garcillano's signature. But Garcillano replied that he had signed the document on May 26, 2005, when he was still holding office. He said it just took time for the Comelec to release the decision.

"We're not going to change history for anybody," said Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin, facing reporters after the five House committees wrapped up their seven-month inquiry.

Electoral reforms

House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano said the inquiry succeeded in "making clear that President Arroyo has no mandate and government resources were not only squandered but used for campaign and cheating."

Locsin said the committee report would delve on amendments to the Omnibus Election Code and the Anti-Wiretapping Law, among other things. The report, which will be adopted by the committee on Feb. 15, will have "very little" deviations from the draft report, he said.

Locsin, chair of the House committee on suffrage and electoral reform, said Congress failed to establish the role played by the military in the alleged cover-up of election fraud.

AFP not talking

"The heart of this investigation that even the Senate can't investigate is: Did a part of the Armed Forces of the Philippines bug the conversations of the President? We can't penetrate it because they just won't talk. There is a theoretical power to control the Intelligence Service of the AFP through the budget. That depends on the leadership of the House."

Isafp chief Brig. Gen. Marlu Quevedo and two of his subordinates did not appear at the hearing, citing Executive Order No. 464. This bans administration officials from attending congressional inquiries without the President's authorization.

While the wiretaps were played during the hearings, their authenticity had not been established. Locsin said that the tapes formed part of the public record and anyone could listen to them without being haled to court.

Closure not up to Congress

Locsin stressed that the legitimacy of the presidency of Ms Arroyo was not an issue in the inquiry. But he said that the President had "to do something that would make people believe her and want her to stay."

Locsin said Congress should not be relied upon to put a "closure" to the political crisis, adding that it discovered its "potentials and limitations" during the inquiry.

"By patiently listening to people give their stories, some of which were cock and bull stories, we introduced a measure of reflection, stability and sobriety to this controversy. Now you know everything that was said, everything that is alleged is there. If you want to make an issue out of it, it's well documented," he said.

"It's a pity that we're not the US because our actions should actually be complemented by executive action," he said, referring to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Drilon asks for military report

Also yesterday, Senate President Franklin Drilon called on Malacañang and the Armed Forces to submit to the upper chamber the military report on the involvement of four generals in the alleged rigging of the 2004 presidential election as allegedly shown in the wiretaps.

"We believe it is to the public interest that this report is submitted to the Senate," Drilon told reporters. "The public must know the truth behind these allegations in the Garci tapes."

Rear Adm. Mateo Mayuga, as inspector general, conducted an investigation of the accusations against Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon, retired Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, and retired Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani. His report has not been made public.

Drilon said that a failure by the military to submit a report could be interpreted as cover-up and warned that this could make things difficult for Senga and Mayuga at their confirmation.

With a report from TJ Burgonio

Cory says too much focus on Charter change

From page A1

sory body to the President and should not have been a platform to push for Cha-cha."

Other administration senators told the INQUIRER that instead of a dialogue, they were treated to "lectures" on the urgency of changing the Constitution.

Asked if the council just wasted its time, Aquino quipped: "Not really. I was not there so I'm in no position to say they wasted their time or not."

While she welcomed the council's decision to proceed with the local and national elections in 2007, more pressing issues like poverty should have been tackled instead of Charter change, Aquino said.

"At least, they will not push through with 'No-El' (no elections). That's one thing," Aquino told the INQUIRER at the Christ the King Church in Las Piñas City where she attended a birthday Mass.

No violence, please

On the fugitive mutineers' call for the President to step down, Aquino said that while she understood their predicament, she would never espouse violence to remove Ms Arroyo from office.

"Well I had asked for her (Ms Arroyo) resignation. But I just want to make it clear that I'm against any form of violence," she stressed.

Still, Malacañang greeted its former ally a happy birthday.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said he was certain the Palace had sent birthday greetings to Aquino as he himself personally greeted the former President.

"We can only wish her the best during her birthday," Ermita told reporters.

Ms Aquino used to be an ally of Ms Arroyo until she called for her to step down in July last year amid allegations she rigged the 2004 presidential election.

Edsa I significance

Ermita said the Palace continued to acknowledge the significance of the Edsa I people power uprising, which is set to mark its 20th anniversary next month.

Ermita said he was privileged to be part of that "historic event" which saw the toppling of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the rise to power of Aquino, the widow of Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino.

"I suppose while there are differences from among the players, the event itself should not suffer because the Filipino people, the whole world knows the significance of people power," Ermita said.

"And we should always uphold each revolutions on what it stood for us, on what it stood for democracy," he added.

Ms Arroyo herself was catapulted to the presidency in 2001 by a people power uprising led by Aquino and the late Cardinal Sin.

Family affair

Aquino was joined at the birthday Mass by children Balsy, Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, Viel, Pinky, and Kris and grandson Joshua.

After the Mass, Aquino thanked the people for continuously praying for her good health, and asked them to continue praying for the country.

Aquino and Kris gave away gifts to children present in the Church as a token of appreciation for their attendance.

Micro-finance projects

Before the Mass, Aquino visited micro-finance groups in Las Piñas. Micro-finance projects have been her special advocacy since she left the presidency in 1992.

"I appreciate very much what the micro-finance organizations are doing and they are, in fact, really improving the lot of the poor. That is why I'm spending my birthday with them," she stressed.

Aquino said she wanted more organizations to be involved in micro-finance to address the country's festering poverty problem.

Ex-treasurer gets 17 years over missing P26,000 in 1976

From page A1

fertilizer fund in the run-up to the 2004 elections, former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante remains a free man.

The Sandiganbayan Second Division meted out the sentence to Marcelino Pagaddut for a crime he committed 30 years ago.

The antigraft court junked the appeal of his 2003 conviction by the Ifugao Regional Trial Court Branch 14.

Pagaddut was indicted for malversation of public funds after the provincial auditor found his collections to be short by P25,960.28 during a special audit in February 1976.

The Ifugao RTC sentenced Pagaddut to a 12-year maximum prison term in July 2003.

Defense

The Sandiganbayan, however, set aside the sentence, noting that the proper penalty should be 10 to 17 years because the defendant's age was below 60 when the case was filed against him in 1977.

In addition, the graft court raised the total fine imposed on Pagaddut to P51,920 from the P20,580 set by the lower court.

In his defense, Pagaddut claimed that his collection fell short because of cash advances by former Lamut Municipal Mayor Angelito Guinid.

However, some of the receipts he produced were written on pieces of paper that included a cigarette foil wrapper.

Pagaddut explained that he did not speak to prosecutors about Guinid's cash advances because he was hoping that the mayor would liquidate his cash advances.

He said he was aware that cash advances without specific expenditures were not supposed to be approved. But he accommodated Guinid because he feared losing his job if he did not grant the mayor's request, the former municipal treasurer said.

The Sandiganbayan, however, said that even if Pagaddut did not personally benefit from the funds, he was still liable because he allowed another person to use it against the interest of the municipal government.

"The fact that petitioner did not personally use the missing funds is not a valid defense and will not exculpate him from his criminal liability.

Malversation consists not only of misappropriating or converting public funds or property for one's personal use but also of knowingly allowing others to make use of or misappropriate them," the court said in a 10-page decision penned by Associate Justice Francisco Villaruz.

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Manila Water wants piece of action elsewhere in Asia

MANILA WATER CO. INC. IS TOUTING ITS record of connecting thousands of homes in in Metro Manila in a bid for a slice of water privatization action elsewhere in Asia.

Manila Water, which has run a concession in the east of the city since 1997, says it has lifted the number of households with 24-hour-a-day running water by about 80 percent to 593,000 and cut "leakage" from the system to 35.6 percent of the water from 63 percent.

In sharp contrast, on the other side of the city, Maynilad Water of Benpres Holdings Corp. was forced to give up its concession after a heavy debt load was soured by the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

The water system in western Manila has hardly changed, with about 70 percent leaking away either through bad pipes or illegal siphoning.

Manila Water, which raised US$100 million in an initial public offering in March, now plans to bid for the western concession, scheduled to be re-offered by the government in the middle of this year.

But it is also ready to employ its business model abroad.

Company president Antonino Aquino said on Wednesday he was interested in Indonesia, Vietnam and India, where the World Bank was looking to carry out water projects.

The World Bank's private sector arm, the International Finance Corp., owns a 7.4 percent stake in Manila Water, which also counts the Philippines' Ayala Corp., Japan's Mitsubishi Corp. and Britain's United Utilities as shareholders.

"Going overseas, we're looking for similar structures," Aquino told a news conference in Hong Kong. "We would like to have a project or two a year, starting from now."

Aquino said Manila Water, with an investment of $223 million, had laid 1,208 kilometers of new pipes in the last eight years, allowing consumption to almost double in the area to 859 million liters per day.

As the city grows, the firm plans to add another 40,000-50,000 Manila households to mains water each year, taking most of the 4 billion pesos it has earmarked for yearly investment.

The company is also bidding for bulk water supply projects in Cebu and Bulacan worth a combined P6.5 billion pesos.

Aquino said Australia's Macquarie Infrastructure Group would provide stiff competition for the western Manila water concession, but generally big Western utilities firms were withdrawing from Asia.

"There's a vacuum of sorts that has been created," he said.

Thames Water, for example, held talks to buy into the firm running Shanghai's water system but they came to nothing as the British firm decided to focus on the European market.

Manila Water shareholder United Utilities has had one prominent failure in Asia, where its Northwest Water unit led a consortium to build a Bangkok waste water treatment system in that was abandoned during the Asian economic crisis.

Reuters

NWRB: Big job, little resources

By Blanche S. Rivera

DO THE MATH. FIVE PEOPLE MONITORING 18,000 legal wells and at least 1,300 illegal connections equal near despair.

The National Water Resources Board has only five people monitoring legal deep well operators all over the country, including 330 subdivisions that have separate water utility, while trying to uncover illegal connections.

NWRB executive director Ramon B. Alikpala said another five people are part of his enforcement division, all based in Metro Manila while mandated to monitor the entire Philippines.

"We have five people to monitor legal and illegal users on the entire country, and we have no office outside this floor," Alikpala said.

He said the NWRB's mandate is getting a boost only from reports given by water utilities who reveal what establishments do not have connections with them but continue to operate, apparently supported by illegal wells.

There are around 1,300 establishments in Metro Manila alone that are operating illegal wells, depleting Metro Manila's aquifer and threatening water supply in eight areas within the metropolis.

The NWRB has served cease-and-desist orders on 98 establishments, including golf courses, schools and seminaries since last year, but few of them have shut down their wells.

The NWRB has only P190,000 annual budget for travel, which means it could hardly send out personnel to inspect or close down erring establishments outside Metro Manila.

The NWRB has also failed to take over the mandate to monitor the 600 water districts, which are now under the Local Water Utilities Administration, because it does not have the personnel.

Alikpala said the NWRB has been planning to open an office in Cebu, one of the provinces with the most critical water supply, but it has not been able to increase its budget.

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Miriam scores; VFA office abolished

From page A1

cause he has no authority to speak," she said.

On Tuesday, Paredes warned that the Philippines could lose up to $8 million a year in military and humanitarian benefits if the 1998 agreement were abrogated.

Told yesterday of the developments at the Senate, Paredes expressed total surprise.

"I don't know of any reason why [this should happen]," he told the INQUIRER when reached at his DFA office. Paredes said he saw Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita last Monday, "and there was no mention of this."

Face and voice

Paredes has practically been the face and voice of the VFACom since the alleged rape began making headlines, providing reporters updates on the rape case as well as airing his legal opinions on the RP-US accord.

He is the only Filipino government official of rank allowed by the US Embassy to see the accused Marines in two visits made to the mission—one last November and the other early this month.

"I feel disappointed, and I believe we were doing our job," said Paredes, a 1971 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy who joined the right-wing Reform the Armed Forces Movement in the mid-1980s.

Asked if he thought his recent statements could have caught the ire of Malacañang, he said: "If some people somewhere are against me personally, they should just remove me, not the office."

And if the VFACom is being considered a "redundant" government office, "why say that only now?" he said.

Paredes pointed out that the VFACom was a creation of the Senate itself: "Didn't they see [the supposed redundancy] when they passed Senate Resolution No. 18 in 1999?"

He said that he had been "quite zealous" in performing his functions, and that he had just arrived early this week from Mindanao where he oversaw the latest RP-US Balikatan exercises and community projects under the VFA.

According to Paredes, the VFACom is an organization of only seven persons, himself included, and a staff composed of personnel from the DFA and the Department of National Defense.

Cut budget

Santiago said she was present when Ms Arroyo instructed Ermita to draft the executive order to abolish the VFACom.

"Madame Senator, I understand there is a plan to abolish that office principally by denying it a budget, and I understand also that the President has agreed to this," Romulo said at the hearing.

Asked later by reporters about the President's possible reasons, Romulo said: "Well, that is the decision of the Senate. Senator Defensor said she is recommending that [the VFACom] be abolished, and she said the President agrees. So I say amen.

"Obviously, if you don't have a budget, how can you continue [operating]?"

Without naming Paredes, Santiago assailed the official for making it appear that he was speaking for the administration.

"This executive director has deluded the media into the belief that he has authority to speak for a group of Cabinet members of which he is not a member. In other words, he is a minor functionary of the DFA but he struts around as if he heads the [VFACom]," she said.

Media mileage

Romulo said he had asked the media not to refer to Paredes as a foreign undersecretary "because he is not."

Santiago told Romulo: "In fact, according to Secretary Ermita, they do not meet. So, it is erroneous as well to refer to him as a ... Palace official because his office is in the DFA [but] he does not report to you."

She said Paredes also did not report to Ermita "in the same way that secretaries, clerks or stenographers do not report to a department secretary."

"And yet, it is astonishing how much media mileage he has been able to accrue for himself by identifying himself as executive director of [the VFACom], even receiving an invitation to visit the Marines ahead of the oversight committee of the Congress," Santiago said.

"So apparently, misimpressions must be corrected not only on the part of this official himself but also on the part of the US Embassy, who has begun to believe his own propaganda," she said.

Romulo assured Santiago that he had informed the US Embassy of Paredes' standing in the administration.

"We have advised them accordingly, Madame Senator, and I think that should not continue anymore," he said.

Back-channeling

Santiago said Romulo had assured her that the DFA would support "any action that the Congress might take" on the VFA.

She quoted Romulo as saying that he was ready to "carry out" any foreign policy Congress might pass, and that like Congress, he also favored a renegotiation of the agreement.

But Romulo told the Senate during the hearing that the government was still pursuing "back-channel" negotiations with the US government for the custody of the four US Marines charged with rape in Olongapo City.

He said US state department officials had also assured him that the issue would be discussed "at the highest echelons" of Washington.

Romulo also lauded the Lovfa decision on Jan. 19 calling on Congress to issue a notice of termination of the VFA and its renegotiation during the compulsory six-month waiting period.

"Madame Senator, I respect the decision of the (Lovfa) in its recommendation. I think certainly it has been helpful with our talks with our counterparts," Romulo said.

"I agree with the national consensus [for a renegotiation], Madame Senator. In fact, that is the position I adopted from the very beginning, after reading the provisions of the VFA as well as the notes on the proceedings ... And that is, that this is an extraordinary case and custody [of the accused Marines] should belong to us," he said.

Romulo made these statements after Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile plied him with questions for not raising the issue with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when he visited Washington recently.

But Romulo told the senator: "As far as I'm concerned, we are handling that with the US Embassy here. So I did not think that there was any necessity to have a scheduled meeting [with Rice]." *With a report from Volt Contreras*

No-El alive after all; Palace says no consensus on issue

From page A1

also said. "[It was] just mentioned in passing in the statement of congressmen and a few senators who made the comment on the election."

The other day, former President Fidel Ramos and Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the majority of those who spoke at the Council of State meeting favored holding elections.

Asked about Ramos and Bunye's statements, Ermita said: "If the interpretation of everyone is like that, because that's what they thought of it, then let's believe them."

"I am just telling you also what I seriously know about the deliberations because I was present."

For dissection

Even Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said that at the Council of State meeting, the majority of those present were for the scrapping of the 2007 election.

"If you make a head count there, No-El would win. The anti-No-El [advocates] were just more vocal about their views," said Gonzalez, who was at the meeting.

He also said that far from being resolved, the no-election proposal was only thrown to an "enlarged committee" made up of congressmen, senators, businessmen and leaders of nongovernment organizations, to "dissect."

"The consensus is that there should be Charter change, but the sticking point is No-El," he said.

Gonzalez said what was compounding the no-election proposal was the issue of electoral reforms.

He quoted Sen. Richard Gordon as saying that "nothing will come out credible" in the election if reforms were not put in place.

Of the senators who attended the council meeting, only Gordon spoke in favor of the no-election proposal, Gonzalez said.

Compendium

Secretary Ricardo Saludo released to reporters a communique, saying this was "a compendium of all discussions put together in a form that would be a statement" of the Council of State.

The two-page document was silent on the no-election proposal. It merely stated, among others, that the council supported the appointment of retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide as senior presidential adviser on electoral reforms, the creation of a Charter change advocacy commission, and that there was a need for Congress to undertake dialogue and cooperation on proposed changes to the Constitution.

Saludo and Ermita said Ramos "had a contribution" in the preparation of the Council of State communique.

Outgoing Presidential Management Staff chief Rigoberto Tiglao said there was no formal decision that emerged from the discussions on the no-election proposal. He said this was why President Macapagal-Arroyo proposed a dialogue in Congress.

Saludo said the President suggested the convening of a "bicameral discussion panel" made up of five senators and five congressmen "to discuss issues on Charter change and seek to forge some kind of agreement on the matter."

In a statement, Ms Arroyo said she would be "guided by the consensus gathered in the meeting, and work with Congress to carry it to fruition under the sovereign will of the people."

Public funds

But senators balked at the Council of State's decision to create an advocacy commission to push for Charter change, warning that it would be met with opposition because it would entail use of public funds.

"Malacañang may be treading on a potential land mine with its plan to create an advocacy commission ..." Sen. Joker Arroyo said in a statement.

"Where does that put those who are against Charter change? They are at a terrible disadvantage, and Malacañang unabashedly abets it," he said.

The maverick administration senator pointed out that the President was free to take sides, but was "unfree to use government monies, resources, facilities, and time to promote her side, to the prejudice of those opposed to her."

"As President, she is bound 'to do justice to every man,' to play fair and square, even to those opposed to her advocacy," he added. "That is why the Senate has to be the Gibraltar, something the President cannot seem to comprehend."

Gordon, chair of the committee on constitutional amendments, demanded to know where the government would get the money to keep the commission in operation.

"If constitutional change is required, where is the fund going to come from? Are we going to use people's money again?" he said in an interview.

Stop arguing

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. declared that the seven-member minority bloc had not changed its position against Charter change, which he considered a ploy to keep the President in power.

Administration congressmen unaware of Malacañang's clarification on the no-election proposal said discussions on the matter should forthwith be stopped.

"Let us be consistent with the Council of State's decision. The No-El proposal was a [Consultative Commission] recommendation which was well considered and weighed. But the council has decided; hence, we must respect its decision," Baguio City Rep. Mauricio Domogan, a vice chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, said in a statement.

"Let's proceed with the elections next year and allow incumbents with a six-year mandate to finish their term in 2010," Domogan said.

Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella said the scrapping of the no-election scenario in the House deliberations would end speculations that Charter change was meant to ensure the President's political survival and the perpetuation in power of incumbent officials.

"This should allow us to get on with Cha-cha (Charter change)," Puentevella said. *With a report from Norman Bordadora*

Pope's first encyclical: Back to basics and love

From page A1

turn to the basics of Christianity with a relatively uncontroversial meditation on love and the need for greater works of charity in an unjust world.

Back to basics

Even Vatican officials have expressed some surprise at the topic, considering Benedict was the Vatican's chief doctrinal watchdog and could easily have delved into a more problematic issue, such as bioethics, in his first authoritative text.

In the encyclical, Benedict said the Church's work caring for widows, the sick and orphans was as much a part of its mission as celebrating the sacraments and spreading the Gospel. However, he stressed that the Church's charity workers must never use their work to proselytize or push a particular political ideology.

"Love is free; it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends," he wrote.

"Those who practice charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love."

Marxist model

He rejected the criticism of charity found in Marxist thought, which holds that charity is merely an excuse by the rich to keep the poor in their place when the rich should be working for a more just society.

While the Marxist model—in which the state tries to provide for every social need—did respond to the plight of the poor faster than even the Church did during the Industrial Revolution, it was a failed experiment because it couldn't respond to every human need, he wrote.

Even in the most just societies, charity will always be necessary, Benedict said.

POPE Benedict XVI greets the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square during his weekly Angelus prayers in the Vatican Jan. 22. REUTERS

"There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable," he said.

Benedict stressed that the state alone was responsible for creating that just society, not the Church. "As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility," he said.

However, he said the Church wanted to be involved in political life by helping "form consciences in political life and stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest."

He said the Church was "duty-bound" to offer such a contribution, and that the lay faithful, who are citizens of the state, were duty-bound to carry it out through works of charity.

While stressing that the Church has no direct political role, Benedict does offer a prescription for what the state should do.

"We do not need a state which regulates and controls everything, but a state which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need," he wrote.

Unity of love

The text is divided into two parts: Part I explores what Benedict calls the "unity of love," in which he explains the two concepts of love found in the word "eros"—love between man and woman—and the Greek concept of love in the world "agape"—unconditional love.

The two become most unified in marriage between man and woman, when after an initial covetous love between the two there grows a self-giving love of one to the other, Benedict wrote. That love is also found in the unconditional love of God for mankind, and the love that humans should have for their neighbors, he said.

Part II takes that theological concept into concrete terms, which he said was found in the Church's charitable activities, where the love of one's neighbor is put into practice. *AP*

People's champion arrives Friday; first stop, Palace

From page A1

platinum CD, "Para Sa'yo Ang Laban Na 'to," in their 9:30 a.m. meeting tomorrow in Malacañang.

The CD was produced by Star Records, a subsidiary of ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., which aired the rematch between Pacquiao and Erik Morales, rated as the most watched television event in Philippine history by AGB Nielsen based on unofficial records.

Pacquiao's CD has nine songs. Its jacket shows the boxer holding an acoustic guitar with his boxing gloves draped on his shoulder.

Limcauco said Ms Arroyo was looking forward to the meeting.

"We expect Manny Pacquiao and his family to meet the President ... The meeting was mutually agreed upon. This is a call to the leader of the land from someone who is not shy about his fondness for the President," said Limcaoco in a phone interview.

Arrival at 4:30 a.m.

"It's not an imposition on Pacquiao," said Limcauco of criticisms that the President was capitalizing on Pacquiao's phenomenal popularity to boost her rock-bottom ratings.

Limcauco said Ms Arroyo wanted to meet Pacquiao immediately after his plane lands.

"But Manny Pacquiao has to rest for some hours because he'd arrive in the early morning of Friday between 4:30 and 5 in the morning," Limcauco said.

The meeting with the President will be open to the media. Limcauco said the boxer would also meet officials and staff of Malacañang on the Kalayaan grounds before proceeding to meet Manila Mayor Lito Atienza for the motorcade in the capital city.

Limcauco said Ms Arroyo and Pacquiao would meet again at the Rajah Sulayman Plaza in Malate for the tribute to all outstanding Filipinos who emerged in the last 12 months.

"The President was the one who provided the inspiration for the program to pay tribute not only to Pacquiao but also to other Filipinos who made us proud," said Limcauco.

Other honorees

The honorees include the Filipino athletes who won medals in the Southeast Asian Games and the Paralympics, Miss International Precious Lara Quigaman, fast-rising boxer Jimrex Jaca and Cristina "Tinay" Bugayong, the Grade 6 pupil who returned P300,000 in cash and checks she found near her home.

Atienza said the City of Manila was preparing for a "champion's welcome" that included a ticker-tape parade. Organized by the Manila Sports Council, the welcome rites for Pacquiao carried the title "Tagumpay ng Pinoy."

"Manny Pacquiao deserves another hero's welcome for lifting the spirit and moral of the Filipino people," Atienza said, adding that City Hall intended to exceed the warm welcome they last gave Pacquiao.

Following simple rites at the City Hall, Pacquiao will lead a motorcade that will take him to the streets of Manila to enable the residents to get a glimpse of the city's adopted son. The Pacquiao entourage is also expected to be showered with confetti from his fans along the route of the motorcade.

Lettermen serenade

The caravan will pass through Escolta, the University Belt, Quezon Avenue, Aurora Boulevard and San Andres before proceeding to other activities prepared by the local government.

After the motorcade at around 4:30 p.m., Pacquiao is expected to attend the "Tribute to Pinoy Champions" at the Rajah Sulayman Park with a special appearance by the Lettermen, which is in the country for a series of shows. This will be followed by a street party dubbed as "Hataw Pacquiao Victory Party" at 7 p.m. at the same venue.

Traffic authorities announced that the northbound lane of Roxas Boulevard will be closed to vehicular traffic starting at 3 p.m. while the southbound lane will be closed from 7 p.m.

Davide slammed for taking position as GMA adviser

By Nelson F. Flores

FORMER SENATOR RENE Saguisag said yesterday that former Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.'s acceptance of his appointment as President Macapagal-Arroyo's adviser on electoral reforms demeaned the Supreme Court because it placed a former chief magistrate of the land "under the beck and call of Malacañang."

Speaking to reporters at the Sandiganbayan, Saguisag warned that Davide's "prestige or whatever is left of it will be misused" as Ms Arroyo "would only use Davide and exploit his timidity."

Saguisag was referring to instances when the Judicial Bar Council under Davide allegedly accepted without question the names of people that the President supposedly wanted included on its list of nominees for judicial positions.

Saguisag said that if Davide really wanted to help in reforming the electoral system, he could do so in an informal capacity without accepting an appointment from Arroyo.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio had another view. He said Davide's appointment as presidential adviser on electoral reforms would enhance the reform because of the retired magistrate's experience.

Davide was a member of the Batasang Pambansa and headed the Commission on Elections from February 1988 to January 1990. He is credited with crafting the Comelec's rules of procedure.

President Arroyo announced Davide's appointment as her electoral reform adviser after the Council of State meeting last Tuesday and issued an executive order directing him to submit his report and recommendations not later than 60 days from the start of his work.

Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos welcomed the prospect of working with Davide. He said he and other commissioners would meet with Davide to "discuss the agency's modernization program as well as possible amendments to the Omnibus Election Code."

Abalos added that with Davide's help, Congress might finally be persuaded to give its approval – and funding – to Comelec's long-delayed modernization program.

The appointment also drew mixed reactions from senators.

"I think it was an excellent choice. As former chair of the Commission on Elections, he was knowledgeable about electoral reforms. He has the prestige to push with electoral reforms," Sen. Edgardo Angara said in an interview.

When asked if Davide's appointment was an indication of the administration's seriousness in instituting reforms in the electoral system, he said: "I hope so. We can't afford not to be serious now."

"I hope he's not being used for sugar-coating. We have a committee that wants to institute electoral reforms [first before anything else]," Sen. Richard Gordon said.

Warning up vs mercury in medical tools

By Christian V. Esguerra

AN INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF HEALTH care systems and medical professionals yesterday warned the Philippines and other developing countries against the "onslaught" of mercury-based medical devices shipped from the first world.

Instruments such as thermometers, sphygmomanometers (used to measure blood pressure), and dilation and feeding tubes are steadily being phased out in the United States and some European countries owing to their hazardous mercury content, said Jamie Harvie, a director at the Health Care Without Harm (HCWH).

Mercury is a neurotoxic, heavy metal linked to various health problems in wildlife and humans. Common manifestations are learning disabilities, hand tremors, blurred visions, and movement difficulties, Harvie said

In the US, around 60,000 children are at risk every year of being born with neurological problems that could lead to poor performance in school because of exposure to the hazardous element while in the uterus, according to the fact sheet released by the HCWH.

With countries like the US now getting rid of mercury-based instruments, they might be dumped in the global south, meaning developing countries like the Philippines, the group warned.

"I think it's already happening," Joshua Karliner, HCWH international team coordinator, told the INQUIRER at yesterday's forum on "Mercury in Health Care: Southeast Asia Conference" at the Philippine Heart Center..

The forum, which was intended to educate Filipino health professionals and urge them to act on the dangers of mercury, will kick off similar conventions in Latin America and Africa, according to Harvie.

"A lot of obsolete medical devices are exported, as donations even, to countries that often don't have resources and technology," Karliner lamented.

Sometimes, donations are well-meaning. But when it comes to the context of mercury being phased out in a country like mine (US) and are shipped to another country, that's a problem that we need to be aware of and address."

Convention on hypertension, cholesterol set Feb. 9-11

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN HYPERTENSION and cholesterol problems or dyslipidemia, which are the major risk factors that cause heart attacks and strokes in the country, will be the major focus of discussion during the 11th joint annual convention of the Philippine Society of Hypertension and Philippine Lipid Society.

The convention, slated Feb. 9-11 at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, is organized in cooperation with 22 of the country's top medical societies and professional health organizations.

Focusing on the theme "Bridging the Gap Between the Science and Clinical Practice in the Management of Hypertension and Dyslipidemia," the convention will tackle the latest advances in the management and prevention of hypertension and dyslipidemia.

Diseases of the heart and blood vessels are still the leading cause of deaths in the country. Heart experts agree that the effective management of hypertension and dyslipidemia and other risk factors is a key factor in curbing the increasing disability and mortality caused by cardiovascular diseases.

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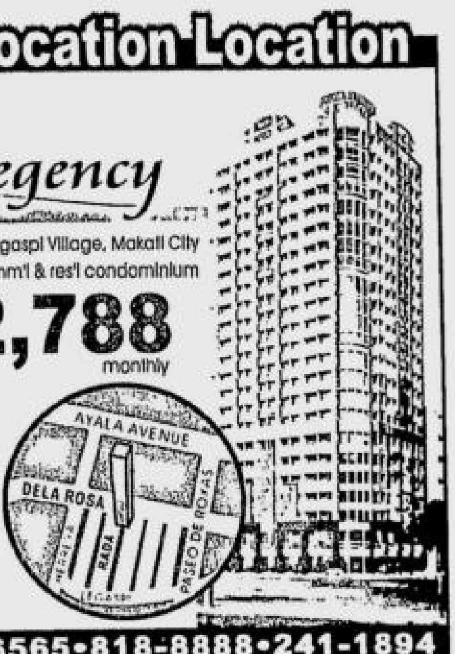

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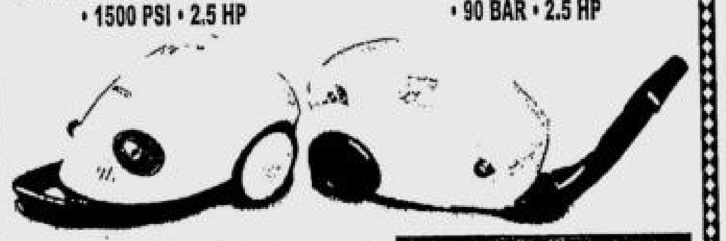

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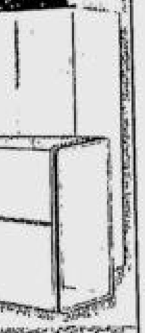

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Icy weather claims more lives in Europe

ATHENS—EUROPE'S RELENTLESS DEEP FREEZE, with sub-zero temperatures as far south as Sicily, claimed several dozen more victims Tuesday, and triggered record consumption of energy for heating homes, and even tents, against the icy weather.

Temperatures as low as minus 36 degrees Celsius crippled power grids, and triggered emergency measures to help the homeless and conserve gas supplies from the Baltic states in the north to Italy and Greece in the south.

The Arctic weather conditions are expected to affect much of central Europe at least through Thursday.

The first two reported victims of the cold in Italy were found in northern towns Tuesday, while Moldovan authorities put their country's toll at 13 people over the past two days as temperatures dipped to lows not seen since 1907.

Even as temperatures warmed slightly in Russia, where scores of people have died since the cold snap began last week, neighboring Ukraine reported the loss of 26 lives overnight Monday, bringing to 77 the number who have died since last week, the health ministry said.

Several deaths were reported Tuesday in Poland, where the toll stands at 39 since last Thursday. Six more fatalities were reported in Turkey, bringing the total for the week to 17.

Snow cut off some 10,000 villages in Turkey, where the Football Federation postponed all matches scheduled for this week because of the cold spell.

In Romania a 55-year-old man died of hypothermia, at least the 22nd victim in recent days, while in Germany the toll climbed to five when a 63-year-old man succumbed to the cold in his unheated apartment in Senftenberg.

In the center of Prague officials have erected a "tent city," an enclave of five heated army tents to house the homeless still left on the streets as local shelters have filled up. The cold snap through Monday claimed five lives in the Czech Republic, including two homeless people found under Prague bridges, local media reported.

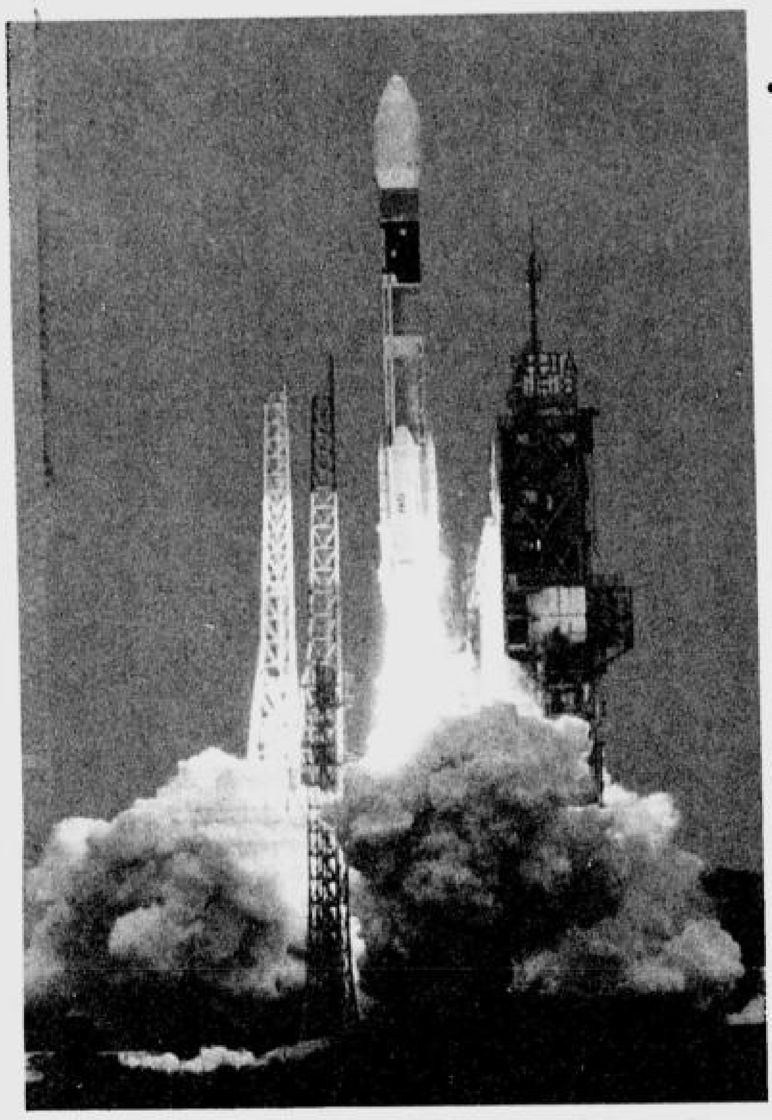
In the Baltic state of Estonia, three more deaths from cold were reported Tuesday morning, while in neighboring Latvia—a country of only 2.3 million—the toll climbed to 40 after six deaths overnight.

The near-record cold has put pressure on energy resources as eastern and central European countries reported record consumption of gas.

Ukraine ordered regional governments to cut gas usage by 15 percent, as the country has exceeded volumes foreseen in contracts with Russian energy giant Gazprom.

Hundreds of residents in Bucharest were stranded without heat because of low gas pressure. The Romanian government called on Gazprom to "honor its contract" on gas deliveries after Bucharest reported a drop in gas supplies from Russia. *AFP*

HOMELESS rest in tents in a camp for homeless people in Bratislava as temperatures below zero hit Slovakia, Jan. 24. AFP



THE JAPANESE-MADE H-2A rocket, carrying a land-observation satellite, blasts off from the launching pad at Tanegashima Space Center on the tiny island of Tanegashima, about 1,000 km southwest of Tokyo Jan. 24. REUTERS

Japan launches satellite to monitor disasters

TOKYO—JAPAN ON TUESDAY launched its space program's leading rocket for the first time in nearly a year, sending into space one of the world's largest land observation satellites to monitor natural disasters.

The H-2A rocket, whose launch had been delayed three times since September due to technical problems and bad weather, lifted off from Tanegashima Space Center in southern Japan at 10:33 a.m. and split 16 minutes later.

"The rocket separated from the satellite smoothly. We consider the launch a success," said Masao Nagashima, a spokesperson for the space center.

The domestically produced rocket carries one of the largest land observation satellites, which can be used to capture images night and day from regions hit by natural disasters.

The satellite can also be used to draft maps and survey for natural resources, with the information to be shared with other Asian nations, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said.

Japan spent 53.5 billion yen ($470 million) over a decade to develop the four-ton satellite.

Japan in February 2005 successfully launched a seventh H-2A rocket with a satellite to forecast weather. It was Japan's first launch since a rocket carrying a spy satellite to monitor North Korea failed in November 2003.

Pressure has mounted on the Japanese space program to show progress as China, a neighbor and growing competitor, presses ahead in space and established space countries take the lead in the lucrative satellite market.

The 2003 failure was all the more embarrassing as it came one month after China became the third country after the United States and the former Soviet Union to launch a successful manned space flight.

While few would feel Japan needs to prove itself in technology, the world's second largest economy is looking for a slice of the market in launching satellites.

But the space agency admitted a new setback last month when it said a Japanese spacecraft likely failed on its landmark mission to collect samples on its first attempt from an asteroid.

The Hayabusa spacecraft, which in November approached the asteroid 290 million km from Earth, went out of control because of a gas burst caused by leaking fuel.

The six-meter unmanned spacecraft had been due to drop a capsule of asteroid dust in the Australian outback in June 2007.

But the agency has said it now expected the spacecraft back in June 2010 as it will be another three years before it is in an ideal position to embark on the long journey back to Earth.

Japan plans to lift off another H-2A rocket in about a month.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, a heavyweight in Japanese industry, was the main builder of the H-2A rocket as part of a government privatization drive. *AFP*

Soothsayers: Year of Dog signals calm before a storm

HONG KONG—THE WORLD can look forward to peace and harmony at the start of the new Lunar Year, but Chinese soothsayers say the world should also expect conflict, disease outbreaks and natural disasters later in the year.

As the world waves goodbye to the Year of the Rooster and welcomes the Year of the Dog on Sunday, believers in Chinese superstition have been consulting traditional fortune tellers, feng shui geomancers and a wealth of new books that claim to be able to predict the year's fortunes.

Feng shui expert and astrologer Raymond Lo said that according to ancient Chinese belief, dog years are characterized by a rise in the strength of fire and earth.

"Fire sitting on earth is a symbol of support and harmony and this may bring a relatively more peaceful year with less international conflicts than in the past few years," Lo said.

The Chinese calendar moves in 60-year cycles, meaning the world will experience in the new year similar events that took place in 1946.

That was the year the United Nations had its first meeting after the Second World War, a time when world powers were concentrating on recovering from war and creating a new world order.

"Likewise, it is expected that there will be more cooperation among countries in 2006 aimed at setting up a more effective world order for the protection of global interests, such as solving environmental issues, global warming problems, religious differences, and the prevention of epidemics," Lo said.

The lunar calendar is based on the cycles of the moon and associates each of the 12 years that form a partial cycle with an animal. The dog is the 11th in the zodiac sequence that starts with the rat, followed by the ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and ending with the pig.

Fortune-tellers base their predictions on the relationship between the zodiac animals and the characters of each animal year.

They also take into account the changing balance over the years in the five spiritual elements that Chinese philosophy believes form the core of the universe—metal, wood, fire, water and earth.

Not all soothsayers agree on what the year heralds.

Another feng shui expert Lee Sing-tong says that things will turn worse later in the year.

"Things might look peaceful first of all, but a lot of problems will start in the middle of the year," warned Lee, a third-generation feng shui master.

He predicted worsening conflicts between China and Japan, a serious earthquake in the Middle East, and a shortage of medicines worldwide.

"There will be a false impression that there will be an improvement in the political environment, peoples' livelihoods, public resources or social welfare at the beginning of the year," Lee said.

"But in the second half year, a situation of shortage will appear and this will result in serious problems in society or cause chaos," he said.

The United States would pull its troops out of Iraq after autumn leading to instability in the Middle East, Lee said.

For individuals, the year in which you were born is believed to shape your character.

People born in years of the dog are thought to be loyal, reliable, persistent, resourceful, unselfish and honest. However, they also tend to be introverted, nosy, anxious, pessimistic, cynical and moody, soothsayers believe.

Celebrities born in years of the dog include US President George W. Bush, model Naomi Campbell, singers Mariah Carey, Cher and Kate Bush, and operatic tenor Jose Carerras.

This Year of the Dog will be especially auspicious as it is a "Double Spring" year, the Chinese calendar equivalent to a leap year, a period during which it is considered lucky for young couples to marry.

As a result, wedding registries up and down China are cramming in ceremonies to cope with a sudden rise in demand, according to the China Daily newspaper.

Another fortune-teller, Alion Yeo, warned of increasing intestinal illnesses or other deadly diseases between the months of April and May.

Unlike the rooster year, whose predicted sex scandals largely didn't materialize, the dog year would come as a complete contrast due to the strong fire element, Yeo said.

"Love will burn like fire; people will be more passionate about their relationships. There is no hiding it," he said. *AFP*

Scientists discover world's tiniest fish

PARIS—SCIENTISTS FROM Europe and Singapore say they have discovered the world's tiniest fish—a species that lives in peat wetlands in Southeast Asia and, when fully grown, is the size of a large mosquito.

The record-busting newcomer to the biodiversity book, *Paedocypris progenetica*, is a distant cousin of the carp, say the discoverers, who publish their findings on Wednesday in Proceedings of the Royal Society B, a British journal.

Skinny and transparent, the elusive fish lives in highly acid peat swamps on the Indonesian island of Sumatra and in the Malaysian part of Borneo that are threatened by forestry and agriculture.

These so-called "blackwater" swamps are a unique landscape of flooded trees growing in water-logged, soft peaty soil that is often several meters thick.

The water is stained reddish-black, like very dark tea, appearing black at the surface. It is extraordinarily acidic, having a pH value of only three, the same as a sour apple.

The scientists needed a special stereoscopic microscope to accurately measure the fish.

The smallest adult specimen they netted was a mature *Paedocypris progenetica* female, found in Sumatra, that came to just 7.9mm from nose to tail, making it not only the world's smallest fish but the smallest vertebrate too.

She nudged out the previous record holder, a marine fish of the Western Pacific called the dwarf goby (*Trimmatom nanus*), which comes in at 8mm at sexual maturity.

The team also found a related *Paedocypris* species, *P. micromegethes*, in Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo.

At 8.8mm, *P. micromegethes* is the second smallest freshwater vertebrate ever found.

The fish was discovered by Maurice Kottelat and Tan Heok Hui, who are researchers at the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research at the National University of Singapore.

They were assisted by Ralf Britz of Britain's National Museum of Natural History and Kai-Erik Witte at the Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology in Tuebingen, Germany.

Kottelat said *P. progenetica* has "a very rudimentary skull" which leaves the brain exposed.

Evolutionary pressures have caused the fish to develop highly modified fins to survive in its special environment. Males also have a tough pad on the front of the pelvic girdle that may be used to help them clutch onto females during mating.

"The discovery of such a tiny and bizarre fish highlights how little we know about the diversity of Southeast Asia," said Kottelat.

"This is all the more serious because the habitat of this fish is disappearing very fast, and the fate of the species is now in doubt." *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Two Germans kidnapped in Iraq

BAIJI, Iraq—Two German engineers were kidnapped Tuesday at gunpoint by men posing as soldiers outside an oil refinery in Iraq, the latest foreigners to fall victim to a renewed hostage-taking spree. The engineers, on short-term contracts in Iraq where they were installing machinery for their German company, were seized as they travelled by car from their lodgings to the nearby high-security refinery compound, oil ministry spokesperson Assem Jihad told AFP. Two Iraqis travelling with them were also abducted, Jihad said. A guard at the refinery, whose access was cordoned off, told AFP the Germans were snatched by seven men, all in army uniform, including two with officer rank. *AFP*

Kuwait names new emir

KUWAIT CITY—Kuwait's Cabinet named Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah as new emir of the oil-rich nation Tuesday, hours after parliament voted the state's ruler out of office on health grounds. Sheikh Sabah, 76, is due to take the oath of office in parliament next week, concluding one of the gravest crises in the Arab Gulf state's history that saw Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah deposed after barely a week in power. "The council of ministers named Sheikh Sabah emir of the country, and this nomination will be referred to the National Assembly (parliament)," for confirmation in line with Kuwaiti law, Justice Minister Ahmad Baqer told AFP following an emergency Cabinet meeting. *AFP*

China reports 70,000 new HIV infections

BEIJING—China reported Wednesday that 70,000 new people were infected with HIV last year, while a total of 650,000 were living with the virus, numbers that international health organizations said showed that the country's AIDS epidemic was still dire. The figures were released in a joint statement by China's Health Ministry, the World Health Organization and the United Nations' AIDS agency. "China's AIDS epidemic shows no signs of abating, with 70,000 new HIV infections in 2005," the statement said. *AP*

Driver error suspected in train crash

BIOCE, Serbia-Montenegro—Montenegrin officials said Tuesday they suspected driver error and brake failure caused a packed train to derail and plunge into a rocky ravine, killing at least 44 people and injuring more than 230. The cause of the crash in the tiny Balkan state Monday was believed to be the driver's "failure to follow procedure," Montenegro Railways executive director Momcilo Rakocevic told reporters, adding that a "thorough investigation is under way." But investigative judge Zoran Radovic told Montenegrin state television that the "most probable cause" of the crash that had fell into a canyon of the River Moraca on Monday, was a "failure" of the brakes. *AFP*

Eight killed in Iran bomb attack

TEHRAN—Eight people were killed and dozens more wounded in a double bomb attack Tuesday in the restive southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz, where a visit by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was cancelled at the last minute. Witnesses said the first bomb to rock the city—dominated by ethnic minority Arabs and capital of oil-rich Khuzestan province—was in front of a private bank and busy commercial area. The second was in front of a government building. The latest toll was eight dead and 46 injured, local hospital director Mansoor Soltanzadeh told official media. "The president had been scheduled to give a speech this morning in Ahvaz, although the bombs did not explode in the same place where the speech was scheduled to have been delivered," an aide to the president told AFP. *AFP*

Palestinians vote in election

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK—PALESTINIANS vote in their first parliamentary election in a decade on Wednesday and could bring the powerful Islamic movement Hamas into the government for the first time.

Israeli officials have cautioned that a victory for Hamas, behind dozens of suicide bombings and officially committed to destroying the Jewish state, could herald an end to Middle East peacemaking. The United States is also worried.

Opinion polls show Hamas, running for parliament for the first time and standing on an anti-corruption platform, just a few percentage points behind President Mahmoud Abbas' ruling Fatah.

Abbas urged Palestinians to vote and ordered security forces to prevent any disruption or cheating after weeks of armed chaos that had threatened to delay the ballot.

"These elections will be a step on the way to freedom, achieving our independence and building our state," Abbas said in a televised address. Abbas was elected a year ago.

Some 1.4 million people in the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem are eligible to vote for the 132-member Palestinian Legislative Council in the polls set to open at 7 a.m.

Voters will choose among 11 party lists at the national level and more than 400 candidates running locally in the first parliamentary election since 1996. About 900 foreign observers have been deployed to monitor the process.

The main Palestinian militant groups have pledged to prevent trouble.

Israel's army and police have also pulled back from Palestinian population centers to avoid interfering in the election in the West Bank, which Israel captured in a 1967 Middle East War.

At the same time, Israel kept its forces on a high alert to prevent attacks by militants of the Islamic Jihad, a group boycotting the ballot and which claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Israel last Thursday. *Reuters*

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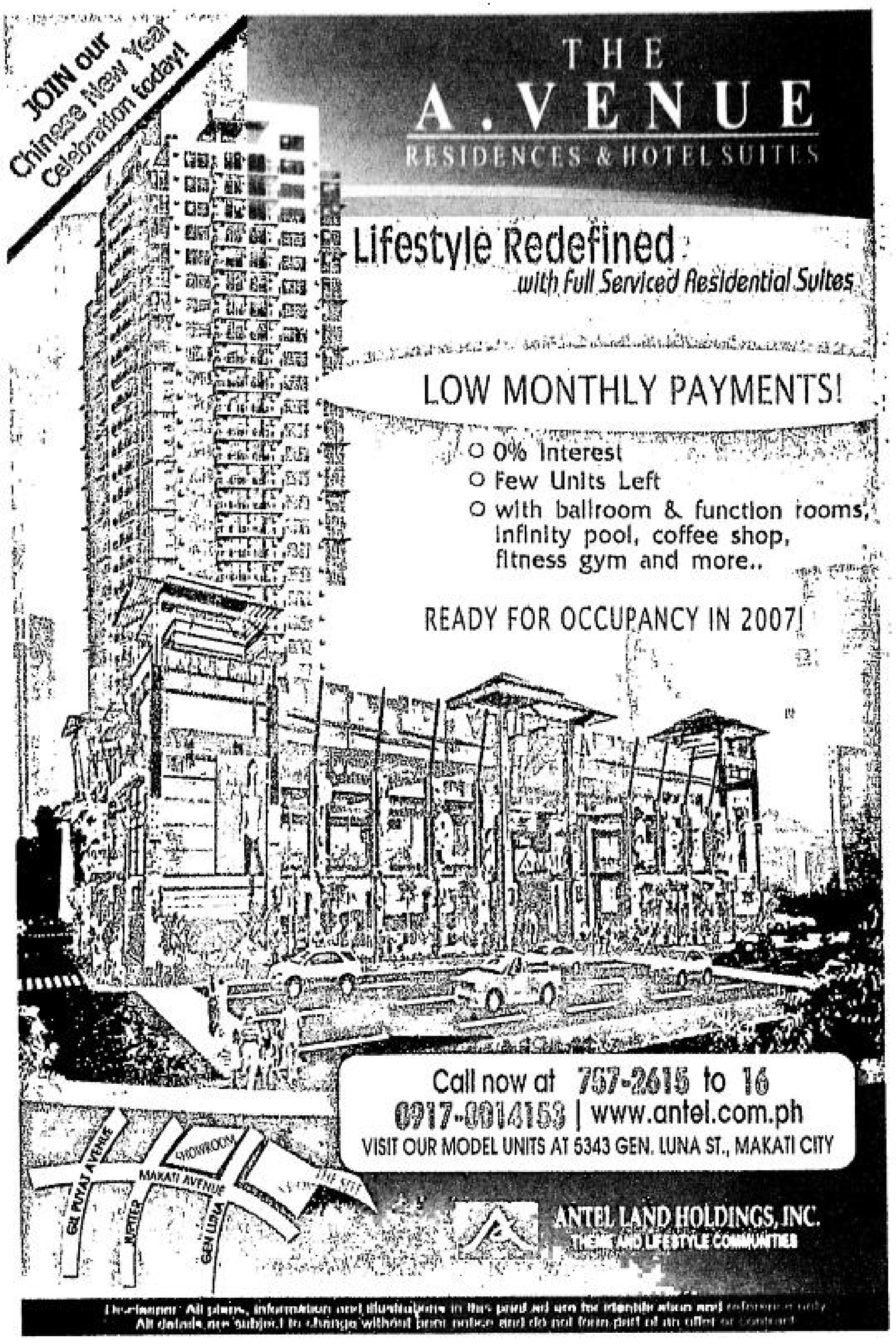
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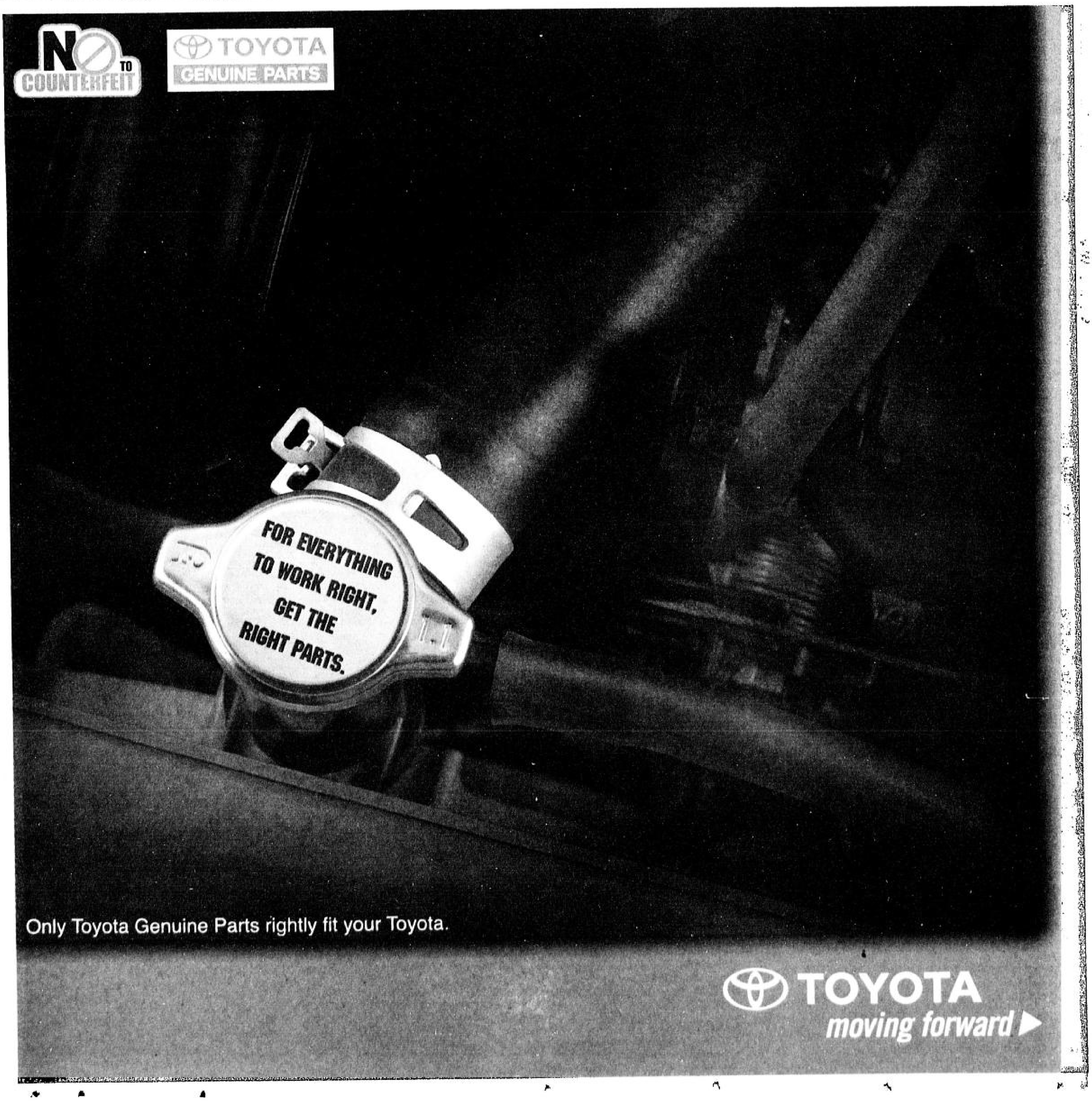
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OPINION

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Deficit in candor

EDITORIAL

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE NATIONAL GOVernment was able to hold down the budget deficit to only P146.5 billion in 2005. It had expected the deficit to reach P180 billion but it succeeded in cutting the amount down by 21.7 percent. The immediate result of the announcement made Monday was a sharp fall in the cost of government long-term borrowings, with the yield of 25-year bonds going down by 1.25 percentage point from its level in July last year to 11.25 percent. Anticipation of an improved fiscal condition had already boosted business confidence in the economy earlier and contributed to the vigorous rally of the stock market. Government economic managers now see a quick fiscal turnaround, with Finance Secretary Margarito Teves predicting an upgrade in the country's international credit rating, which would bring further down interest rates on government loans and sustain the momentum toward balancing the budget.

Such rosy expectations may rest on shaky foundations, however. The bad news is that the deficit narrowed because of expenditure cuts rather than rising revenues, which means vital social services and capital expenditures had to be given up to paint a better fiscal picture. The Department of Finance reported that the Bureau of Internal Revenue was P12.4 billion short of its target collection of P546.9 billion last year, while the Bureau of Customs had a shortfall of P9.5 billion against its target collection of P151.2 billion.

Even as the Arroyo administration talked about fiscal reforms, the BOC managed to reverse last year the trend of rising customs collections established during the term of Commissioner Antonio Bernardo. And just as ominously, the BIR failed to achieve its collection target despite the adoption of several revenue-enhancing measures during the year, notably the so-called sin tax law. While the government expected to raise P7.5 billion in additional revenues from the sin tax, the actual increase was only P2.09 billion for the whole year. The finance department explained that the lower collections was due to a decline in the production of cigarettes and alcoholic beverages, as manufacturers raised their production the year before to avoid payment of higher tax rates.

Granted that this is a valid explanation, it still puts in question the government's ability to make accurate revenue projections. And given such an inauspicious beginning, how sure is the administration that it can collect the promised P100 billion or more in additional revenues from the expanded value-added tax and other new tax measures?

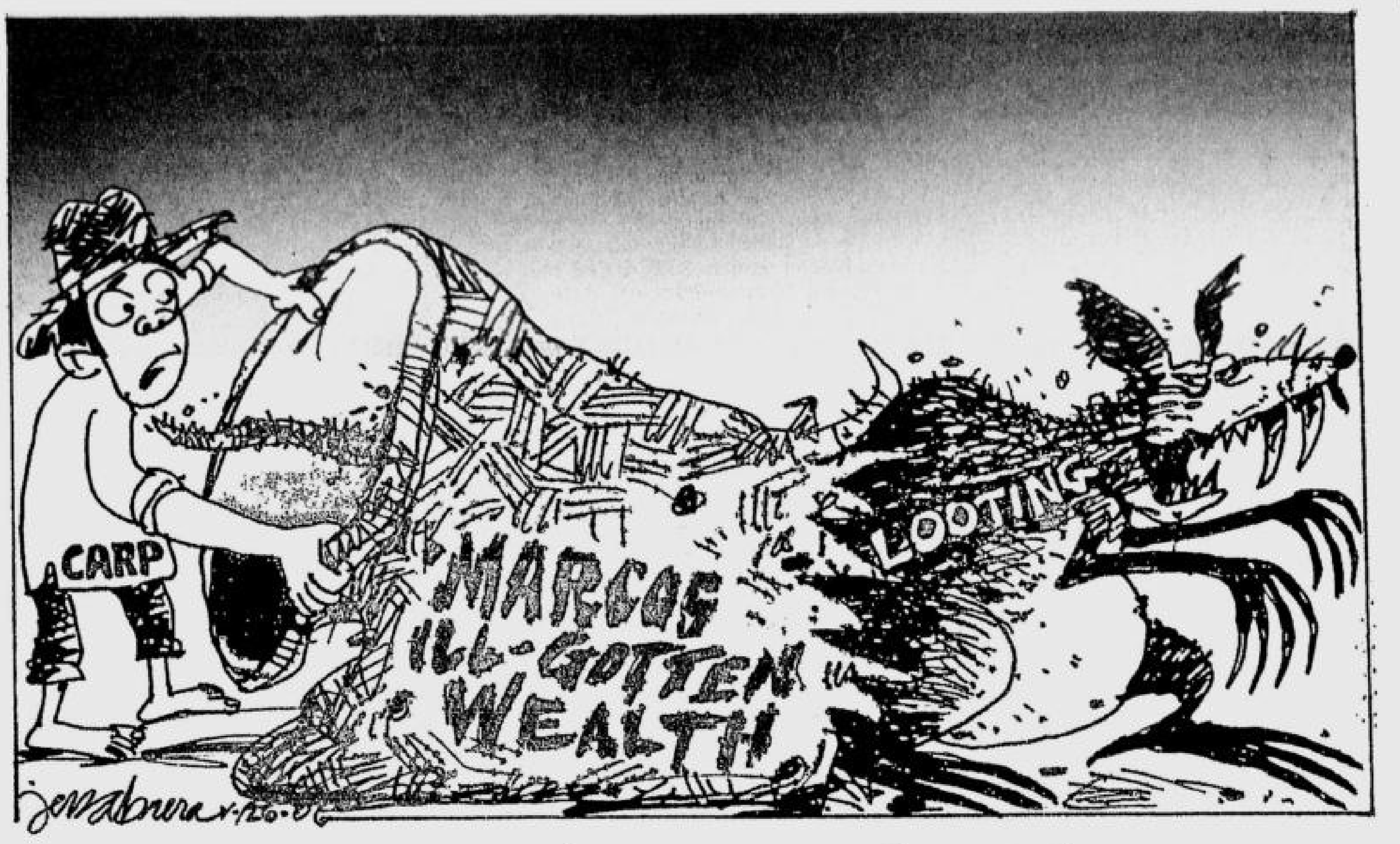
Considering how revenue estimates appear to have been bloated and considering the dismal failure of the collection agencies to deliver on their targets, how can the budget be balanced in 2008 or even 2010?

Of course, the administration could always scrimp. But how much farther can the budget be trimmed realistically?

Besides, cost-cutting seems farthest from the mind of President Macapagal-Arroyo as she continues to fight for political survival. After a year that saw their pork barrel allocations cut by 40 percent, our legislators are now happily looking forward to seeing them restored to their former fat amounts: P200 million for every senator and P65 million for every congressman. Only this week, the President has certified as urgent a bill that allocates P13 billion for increases in the salaries of government workers. And weeks before Teves disclosed the actual budget deficit, Ms Arroyo was already announcing a P35-billion food subsidy program to keep the price of rice at P18 a kilo and noodles at P4.50 per packet. "This is dedicated to the poor communities," she explained.

It was not merely a coincidence that the amount she ordered allocated for the purpose matched the estimated reduction in the budget deficit. Her order was to tap this as the source for the dole, saying this presented "savings" from the 2005 budget. (If some people wonder how anyone could save money that wasn't there in the first place, it's probably because they are not economists like the President.)

Thus, if the President's wishes are followed, the deficit would be what it was projected to be in the 2005 budget. So where is the improvement in the way government manages its finances? And what is the basis for the upbeat mood of many in both government and business?



Firing watchmen into the night

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

HOW DOES A PRIVATE COMPANY DO, IN LESS than a decade, what an inept government water system flubbed in over half a century?

"We pay more for our cholera here," a nun working in a water-short Manila slum once said. But between 1997 and 2005, Manila Water Company jacked up by 92 percent the number of faucets in Metro Manila's poorest communities. At the same time, it pruned water bills by 29 percent.

This Ayala firm stanched water leakages and theft. "UFW," or unaccounted for water, is down from Dhaka-like levels of 63 percent to 35 percent. That's about what Hong Kong loses.

Its staff is a fourth of what the government water firm had. Yet, MWC improved access to 24-hour supply: from one in every four homes to almost all places within its service area. That approaches Singapore's standards. The number of its consumers bolted from 325,000 to 593,000. And MWC made money, too.

This track record recalls the story of how "they fired the night watchman." Government had a *bodega* of junk in the middle of nowhere, that yarn goes. To "prevent theft," they hired a night watchman at P8,000 a month.

"But he lacks instructions," they said. For P18,000 a month each, they hired a cousin who scribbled instructions; and a brother-in-law who filed the papers.

To ensure "oversight," they got five relatives: timekeeper—P22,000; payroll officer—P24,000; legal secretary—P26,000; administrative assistant—P28,000; and administrative officer—P32,000.

"This P2.1 million exceeds our budget," they wailed. They announced to the press a cost-cutting measure: they fired the night watchman.

"No government voluntarily reduces itself," US President Ronald Reagan once said. "A government bureaucracy is the nearest thing to eternal life that we'll see on this earth."

This country had, as of 2001, over 1.53 million public employees. Government remains the single biggest employer. Six out of 10 are employed by national agencies, four by local government units.

An "exploding school population" jacked up in a period of four years, the number of teachers by 19,421. Education accounts for 56 percent of civilian employees. "Soldiers had 9 percent of the payrolls." That includes the Magdalo rebels' paychecks.

Bureaucracy has outpaced population's surge. In 1970, there was one civil servant for every 90 Filipinos. By 2001, we were paying for one government employee for every 50 citizens.

These employees consume 30 centavos out of every tax peso. "Compared to four other Asean countries, the Philippines has the highest wage bill as a percentage of total expenditure," says the Senate Economic Planning Office.

All administrations tried streamlining, reorganizing or reengineering the bureaucracy to trim the wage bill. But bloated personnel hires "crowded out resources for vital social services."

"Personnel services continue to consume a huge chunk of the budget pie." The World Bank and Asian Development Bank study, "Decentralization in the Philippines," notes that local governments routinely fracture the 45-percent cap for personnel hire. This drains maintenance and capital funds.

"The number of personnel has grown while delivery of government services remains dismal. And surveys indicate festering dissatisfaction with government performance."

President Macapagal-Arroyo's Executive Order No. 366 "seeks to develop, in the long run, an efficient bureaucracy," the Senate study says. Size is not the lone criteria.

Being "lean and mean" is equally important, as the Ayala example shows. The ratio between staff and every 1,000 connections was 8.5 in 1997. That dwindled to 2.7 last year.

Skills, incentives and accountability in a civil service trigger economic growth, the World Bank notes. Japan's economic miracle is linked to reforms that "right-sized and professionalized" Tokyo's civil service. Buttressed by simultaneous reform in budget and pension systems, the Japanese civil service evolved into one of the most efficient in the world.

President Arroyo's troubles, ironically, favor keel-hauling a bureaucracy that resists downsizing or privatization. The "budget deficit and fiscal crisis made the public aware of the overarching reason for reforms," the think-tank notes. "Excesses of some government corporations turned the public off."

The President abolished 102 agencies under Malacañang. She transferred 23 other agencies to other departments. Unlike in past programs, the President offers in its Voluntary Retirement System a "golden handshake": an average benefit close to P1 million per employee who retires early. The World Bank supports this project with a $300-million loan.

But its impact may be sapped by the "The Revolving Door Syndrome." This refers to rehiring people who've pocketed the severance "golden handshake."

EO 366 has other components: from consolidation of information systems to curbing wildfire creation of new agencies. Needed, too, is a civil service compensation package that effectively links pay with performance. "He who does not work shall not eat," St. Paul once said.

But these are only first steps "toward a long process of a complete public sector reform," the Senate study notes. It'd be a pity if, in today's political infighting, curbing bureaucracy stagnates and privatization curbs. Firing the watchman will continue late into the night.

* * *

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Miracles

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

GLORIA-MACAPAGAL-ARROYO HAS APPEALED to her foes not to politicalize the Pacquiao fight. That is all very well except for one thing. She should be addressing that message not to her foes but to her friends. She should be addressing that message not to her critics but to her family. She should be addressing that message not to her detractors but to herself.

I did not see Francis Escudero or Alan Peter Cayetano among the crowd on ringside wasting taxpayers' money to see the fight up close and personal. I saw Prospero Pichay and other congressmen do so. I did not see Francisco Gudani or Alexander Balutan clamber up to the stage to embrace the sweating Pacquiao the better to bathe in his glory, I saw Mike Arroyo and Chavit Singson do so. I did not hear Cory Aquino or Susan Roces call up Pacquiao to insinuate themselves into the picture, I heard GMA do so.

The last has taken on poetic justice. In her apology to the nation last year, GMA refused to acknowledge the "Hello Garci" tape, she merely said she had conversations with several people, which included a Comelec official. Ironically, no one has given more ironclad proof of the authenticity of the tape—if indeed that still lay in doubt—than she herself! She did that when she said, for all the country to hear, "Hello Manny." There was DNA imprinted all over that voice. You do not need the CSI to clinch the deal. I wouldn't be surprised if "Hello Manny" becomes the next most popular ring tone, or is put side by side with "Hello Garci."

Raul Gonzalez says it is a case of damn-if-you-do, damn-if-you-don't. If GMA hadn't called up Pacquiao, she would have been arraigned for it, too. Ah, but not at all. I personally would have found it a bigger victory than the one Pacquiao had just wrought. It would have been a triumph over a natural tendency to take credit for all the good that happens in this country but throw the blame for all the bad by pointing to God, the weather and the Charter. To have suppressed that vice, that would have been a victory for the ages.

Do not politicalize Pacquiao's victory? Tell that to Ignacio Bunye who has just announced Pacquiao would have the red carpet laid out for him when he steps out of the plane. Tell that to the senators and congressmen who are frenetically trying to outdo each other thinking of all sorts of honors to bestow upon the conquering hero. All these things are not meant to draw attention to the awardee, they are meant to draw attention to the awarders. I did not see or hear anyone of them express any note of commiseration when Pacquiao lost to Morales 10 months ago. Everyone was busy distancing themselves from him and attending to more important things. Like I said before, the only one that deserves to reap the rewards that have gone and will go Pacquiao's way is Alaxan. At least, it kept faith with him through thick and thin.

Pacquiao has more than his share of accolade. You saw that in the throngs gathered in Quiapo and elsewhere in the country vicariously, and intensely, going through the fight with him. And exploding in jubilation at his triumph. Share his hell, share his heaven. The people already worship him, nothing can top that.

None of this is to underestimate the significance of Pacquiao's fight. None of this is to say that we shouldn't be giving more importance to boxing than it deserves. In the history of nations, sports have always taken an importance beyond themselves. In Latin America, countries have gone to war over football. In Brazil, football is not a sport, it is a religion. At one point, Colombian assassins, believed to have been the thugs of a cocaine lord, gunned down a player who had accidentally flicked a ball into his own goal, thereby booting the country out of the World Cup. I don't see why we shouldn't raise Pacquiao to the rank of national hero.

Indeed, some years ago, while I was in Germany observing its elections, a guide told our group that one of the things that allowed Germany to crawl out of the shame and humiliation of Hitler and the Holocaust was its victory in the World Cup in 1954. Before that, he said, Germany (or West Germany in particular, the East had come into limbo under the USSR) could not lift its head up in the world notwithstanding modest economic gains after the War. The one thing that allowed it to do so was a team no one gave much chance of advancing past the earlier rounds of the World Cup. But advance it did, all the way to the finals. There, it beat favorite Hungary—a team that had crushed it earlier 8-3—and produced spectacular consequences. It brought back pride in German eyes. The event has since been referred to as "the miracle of Bern," in reference to Bern, Switzerland, where the Cup was held.

No, I would not underestimate the significance of Pacquiao's victory to a country that grovels in poverty, hopelessness and a growing incapacity to believe in anything. But we would do well to emulate Germany in two respects, which was how it got out of its own rut. One is that while its government took pride in that victory, it did not claim it as its own. It gave credit where credit was due: to the team that brought home more than just a trophy and to a people who never stopped believing. Two, and far more importantly, it never made that victory substitute for hard work. It never thought that that victory was enough to give people homes and jobs such that government could just sit back and relax—or worse, rob the people blind. The miracle of Bern, a miracle born of people fighting great odds with wit and will, was there to be emulated by everyone, not borrowed—or stolen.

Same question as before: lady and gentlemen, Pacquiao has done his job, when will you do yours?

No substitute for training and discipline

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

ONE LESSON TRULY STANDS OUT FROM MANNY Pacquiao's second fight with Erik Morales: To succeed in an endeavor, there's no substitute for rigorous discipline and training. Pacquiao demonstrated this by undergoing three months of training in the United States where, it must be presumed, he submitted himself to the necessary discipline. His performance in that fight showed a marked difference from his performance in the first fight.

The same lesson can be drawn from the performance of our champs in last year's SEA Games. Many of our top athletes prepared themselves for the Games by training in China (facilitated to a large extent by the much-maligned Mike Arroyo, but which was not even grudgingly acknowledged by the extremely hostile media).

* * *

The role of preparation and professional training was underscored the other day at the press conference of "The Lettermen," the romantic balladeers of the late 1950s and 1960s, who are performing tonight at the Manila Hotel. At one point, they sang our much-loved "Ikaw" a capella and we were amazed at their mastery of Filipino pronunciation—the usual American twang was missing. Tony Butala, the only original of the three Lettermen, told us that in their long singing career they have always made it a point to pronounce foreign words in their songs as correctly and faithfully as possible. But do you know the meaning of what you sang? they were asked. They instantly sang the English translation which, of course, was not quite as nice to listen to. Preparation and training are things which we Pinoys are not big on, but should be.

* * *

The Filipino nation, desperate for heroes, went wild for homegrown champ Pacquiao. The other day, we got another hero, albeit a dead one. Capt. Aniano Amatong chose to first steer his defective aircraft away from a populated area in Paombong, Bulacan instead of ejecting from his plane, thus crashing to his death in a fishpond. Before that, he had ordered his co-pilot to eject. Amatong's heroism comes to light in the wake of reports of a coup plot allegedly being hatched by young military rebels who recently escaped from detention; and of an ongoing recruitment effort to have more young officers join the plot. The PAF captain's selfless and noble feat presents such a marked contrast to the lust for power of the young coup plotters. Sadly, these plotters, like the first generation putschists, don't seem to give a damn about the harm that they might cause an economy just turned away from an Argentine scenario, and now moving toward recovery.

* * *

Luckily, these young plotters are, perhaps, still the minority in the AFP. Over two months ago, this columnist was invited to be a member of the board of judges in the final stage of the Metrobank Foundation's "Search for the Outstanding Philippine Soldiers 2005," chaired by Iloilo Rep. Arthur Defensor. What impressed the judges most about the two dozen candidates drawn from the three major services' officers corps and enlisted personnel ranks was their quiet dedication to duty and love of country—away from the media limelight that has spoiled the Oakwood mutineers and, before them, the gang of Gregorio Honasan. I was particularly impressed with how the Air Force personnel tried their best to keep those planes and helicopters flying by improvising, cannibalizing parts and stretching their ingenuity to incredible limits.

* * *

One of the winners by a near-unanimous vote was Capt. Giemel Espino. He pilots the only rain-making plane in the AFP. At great risk, Espino and his one-man crew, Sgt. Alvin B. Alcantara, charge into big rain clouds in a primitive single-engine plane and seed the clouds to induce rain in drought-infested areas of the country. Their plane is not designed as a rain-making plane and does not possess adequate navigational equipment; but this does not deter them from helping to save crops and huge amounts of money for our agriculture sector. I shall write more about Captain Espino. Suffice it to say that here is one young man who answers to the call of duty without regard for his personal safety. At my request, his unit has submitted a proposal for the acquisition of more sophisticated rain-making planes, each costing $340,000. I shall forward this to Speaker Jose de Venecia so that, perhaps, the House could allocate some funds for this urgent need.

* * *

President Macapagal-Arroyo has registered a negative 15 points in the latest SWS survey, but it seems that, like the proverbial prophet, she is better appreciated by Filipinos abroad. My Sydney-based friend Oscar de Guzman e-mailed the results of an informal poll conducted last Jan. 13 in a Filipino program called "Talakayang Bayan," aired over SBS, a federal government-funded radio station heard all over Australia. He said "the last 10 minutes were allocated for listeners to call in and express their views on whether GMA should stay in office until 2010 or resign." The callers were all women and "100 percent expressed their support for GMA to continue to the end of her term." Most of the comments centered on "how she improves the value of the peso," while most asked, "Who will replace her?"

I understand that this overwhelming support for GMA is common among overseas Pinoys, in sharp contrast to the way she fares poorly in surveys at home. I wonder if this has any connection with what Speaker De Venecia observed in our radio program last Sunday: that most of our OFWs work in a parliamentary setting and know how well it works, which is why GMA's stand on Charter change has their support. If this is the case, I told JDV in jest, perhaps, the plebiscite on the parliamentary shift should be conducted among Filipinos overseas rather than among Filipinos here.

Pacquiao, Onyok, Ali and life

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

I AM NOT A BOXING FAN, BUT I DID WAIT WITH bated breath for Manny Pacquiao's Sunday confrontation with Mexican legend Erik Morales. And I did let out some expletives as I reacted to some punches from either side.

The closest I have been to boxing is in our weekly taebo sessions at the INQUIRER. When our trainer John Q yells "Attack!" we demolish imaginary foes, and at hearing "Defense!" we duck under our fists. You have to be fully focused and cannot allow the mind to wander, otherwise you'd get lost in the footwork. It is during the post-taebo crunches and push-ups that I do my out-of-body flight that helps me make it (arrrgh!) to the last count.

The last time I wrote about boxing was 10 years ago, when Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco Jr. won the silver at the Atlanta Olympics. (Onyok is an Ilonggo endearment for Junior.) The INQUIRER's banner photo of our champ on the podium waving a Philippine *banderita* and wearing that gentliest of smiles brought tears to my eyes. I remember that look—it outshone his silver medal. After having been brutally battered by the judges (but not by the Bulgarian), Onyok emerged unbowed, with a countenance so serene, so beautiful, so gently Ilonggo. That photo spoke a thousand words.

That is why I wrote about it. The human side of it, not the brutal sport. But how does one separate the two? Our sports guru Recah Trinidad will tell you, you can't. And where is Onyok now, I want to know.

Boxing is the sport of the underdog. I have yet to know of a boxer who was born rich. But they could die rich, that is, if they use what they know of boxing in navigating through later life.

Like boxing, long-distance cycling is also for the *anak pawis*. Although every other rich kid now owns a mountain bike, I have yet to know of one that would want to join The Tour. In boxing and long-distance cycling, one has to have a high threshold for pain. These two sports are not for the faint of heart. In golf (which also needs discipline), you take your own sweet time walking, and you have to have lots of money too, unless you are a caddy with access to the green.

Much has been said about Pacquiao, how he made the nation rise as one in jubilation. What he said, thought and felt; what he wore and ate, and his hopes for this fractured nation. Pacquiao's famous victory quote: "*Sana magkaintindihan na tayong lahat.*" (Literal translation: "I hope we would now understand one another.") But we all know that *magkaintindihan* (from *entiende*) means more than just understanding, it means settling differences and living in peace and harmony.

Being mainly a feature writer, I am interested in knowing more about the so-called "Pacquiao Team" that got a little of the limelight. Who are they, what are they?

I have kept all these years the April 25, 1988 issue of the Sports Illustrated magazine with "(Muhammad) Ali and His Entourage" as cover story. It is about "The Greatest" and the people who waited on him when he was the greatest. The story by Gary Smith is a great one. "The champ and his followers were the greatest show on earth, and then the show ended. But life went on." The gleaming black-and-white photographs by Gregory Heisler are probing. It is a story about greatness and decline. It is also about moving on.

Here again are the men and woman who doted on the champ long after the show had ended. All together, they paint a portrait of Ali, even as they paint a portrait of themselves.

Of Ferdie Pacheco, the doctor: "The first signal of decline was in Ali's hands. Pacheco began injecting them with novocaine before fights, and the ride went on. Then the reflexes showed, the beatings began, the media started to question the doctor. And the world began to learn how much the doctor loved to talk...The slower Ali spoke, the more frequently spoke the doctor."

Of Gene Kilroy, the facilitator: "He has covered the walls of his rec room with 50 Ali photos. He reminisces every day. He watches videos of old Ali interviews he helped facilitate...."

Said Lana Shabazz, the cook: "I call him, ask him what he's eatin'. People ask me all the time how he's doin. Know how that feels, when people ask you how's your child, and you don't know what to say?"

Of Luis Sarria, the masseur: "I remembered (those hands), working endlessly up and down the smooth ripples of Ali's body until he drifted off to sleep. His hand I remembered, but I could not remember him."

Of Pat Patterson, the bodyguard: "(He) had to sit on the corner stool and watch helplessly when his man needed protection most, in the ring when the end was near. 'Watching him get hit was like watching someone stick my mama with a knife.'"

Of Herbert Muhammad, the manager: "His dream of building 49 more mosques like this first one, using the money Ali and he could generate, was drifting further and further from his reach. Ali slurred words and shook and didn't want to be seen on television."

Of Drew (Bundini) Brown, the motivator: "the ghetto poet who motivated Ali and maddened him, who invented the phrase, 'Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee'...who licked Ali's mouthpiece before sliding it in but never said a yes to him he didn't mean; who could engage the champion in long discussions of nature and God and man, then lie in the hotel pool before a fight and have his white woman."

Despite his immense wealth, Ali remained trapped in a ghetto.

The world of boxing is a surreal world, a gold mine for stories. Consider the many movies ("The Champ," "Raging Bull," "Million-Dollar Baby") and novels—Norman Mailer's among them. I don't like boxing but I like boxing stories.

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Face of the opposition

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN POINTED OUT THAT while the administration has two clearly identifiable faces—the President and the Vice President—the opposition, up to now, doesn't have one. While efforts have been made to bring the different opposition groups together and to project a more united and coordinated opposition front, much remains to be done. With no one clearly leading the fight, even opposition members themselves admit that their efforts aren't as effective, because there's "no clear alternative."

I believe the alternatives are there. There are two individuals who can raise the banner of the opposition cause, in a manner that creates unity and establishes trust. If one assumes, as I do, that the end of the Fifth Republic is approaching, then the question is whether it will end in an orgy of violence, or in a Lakas-CMD engineered and highly messy transitional system, or in some other transitional regime hopefully involving an election.

The administration has the President and Vice President representing the existing executive authority; and it has Speaker Jose de Venecia as the prime minister-in-waiting. For the same reason that the administration's supporters generally don't consider former President Ramos as the face of the future, the opposition as a whole cannot have former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Joseph Estrada as the faces of the future; just as Susan Roces isn't that face either, even if various opposition camps look up to them as elder statesmen and for guidance.

If the administration relies on the Marcosian argument that "there's no one else"—incidentally a profoundly undemocratic argument—then it behooves the opposition to put forward faces that they perceive to be capable of assuming the leadership of the country at a moment's notice, right here, right now.

In selecting those faces, the opposition must bear in mind that its traditional leaders can help but cannot put themselves forward as the solution; they belong too much to the past and are divisive. Rather, they can help by showing their confidence in leaders who can be trusted to give every other leader, and their followers, a fair deal; leaders who will not favor one group over another, and who can be relied on to be the opposite of what the administration offers. Ms Aquino put it famously in a repartee when Marcos and his daughter made fun of her: at least, she said, she didn't have the experience Marcos had in lying, stealing and cheating.

Who can Aquino and her followers rely on to uphold democracy? Who can Estrada rely on to give him a fair trial, deal with him sincerely and rectify any wrongs that have been dealt him? Who can Roces rely on to honor her husband and restore hope in the country? Who can the middle class trust as a person who understands their needs and who will address their fears? Who can the groups feeling the brunt of official persecution today trust as a person who will deal with them justly and humanely? Who is the leader who understands all the classes and sectors of our society, finding the commonalities that can bring them together? Most of all, who can we look up to, to lead us with a strong sense of duty, rather than with insane and ruthless ambition; to wield power responsibly instead of robbing the country blind or unleashing a new, senseless cycle of revenge?

I believe that man is Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. I believe he enjoys the respect of those people looked up to by the various opposition groups. I am convinced that if what the country needs is a transitional leader capable of running the country during a transitional period (say, leading to, or resulting from, an extraordinary election), that man is him. He knows how government works but has avoided the abuses and temptations of power. He has shown himself capable of earning a national mandate. He has no burning desire to be president but, if called upon to restore the people's faith in their country, will do so not only out of a sense of duty, but out of a desire to live up to the example given the country by his father. If the face of the administration is a presidential daughter, the face of the opposition might as well be a presidential son who represents everything the incumbent is not.

As a civilian with entrepreneurial achievements, Senator Magsaysay understands the needs of the country. He is also respected by the armed forces and can be relied upon to push for reforms in the military.

And then, considering that the three crucial tasks for any future government are: first, to put the economy—particularly, the government's finances—in order so that corruption is eliminated and public funds are spent for the public's benefit; second, to clean up the electoral process so that the public's verdict in every election is unquestionably clear; and third, to institute reforms in the armed forces to put an end to disaffection within its ranks—then the opposition's compromise leader needs a "lieutenant" who will help carry out those objectives.

A danger facing a transitional leader is his becoming the target of adventurists who think that an extraordinary situation allows for even more adventurism than the public is willing to tolerate. One reason why the President feels more and more secure is that her constitutional successor doesn't inspire confidence among her supporters; neither among her enemies. The Vice President, then, is really a negative asset, so to speak.

What the opposition needs is a leader with a deputy who is a positive asset. That person, I'd like to suggest, is Sen. Rodolfo Biazon. He is a man also armed with an existing national mandate. He has courage—and military experience, too.

Falling over the cliff

YOUNG BLOOD

Bernard Inocentes S. Garcia

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

"THE CATCHER IN THE RYE" BY J. D. SALINGER IS MY favorite book. Published in 1951, it remains popular today, attracting millions of readers worldwide. Its universal appeal lies in the way it captures teenage rebellion and angst, criticizing the adult world for its over-emphasis on appearances and its apprehensions over what other people would say.

I have read the book many times, and this evening I find myself reading it again in my favorite café, where my preferred brewed coffee, the cheapest in the house, now costs P45 when a month ago, it was only P35. Anyway, it's past 7 o'clock, dinner time, and so only a few people are around. The place is cozy and the music is cool—perfect for revisiting Pencey Prep where the 17-year-old Holden Caulfield began his story.

With the book in hand, I catch myself in a pensive mood as I reminisce about the first time I held "Catcher" in my hands way back in college when I was still 18. I remember standing at National Bookstore, flipping its pages and hesitating to buy it because if I did, I wouldn't have enough money left to pay for a ticket to a movie I was watching with my friends. I ended up not buying the book.

Now that I'm holding my own copy, I realize that I no longer belong to Holden's world. I can only sigh as I note how fast time flies and how it catches me by surprise.

Yesterday, I bumped into somebody I hadn't seen for about a year. There she was at the same table, still wearing her gray company uniform and sitting in front of me. Smiling, she was telling me excitedly about how she landed a job in a mobile-phone company after applying for almost every job vacancy she could find. And, oh, she had a new boyfriend now—hopefully the last, she told me. Handing me her camera phone, she showed me pictures of them both—in a bar, on a mountain top, on the beach. I thought that if they would go to Disneyland and dress up like clowns, they would still look good together. They were so much in love.

She was the same girl who wouldn't even go with me to a nearby store, telling me I was never the type who would stay committed. Before we parted this time, she said something like, "You still haven't grown up."

Tonight, I can still hear her voice, supplying the lyrics to the instrumental music playing inside the café. Her words touch a chord in my heart, perhaps, because she was right: I haven't changed: I'm still the same long-haired guy in a plain T-shirt and faded jeans. I'm still using the same green backpack I had five years ago. My 3310 looks out of style. It's my sixth phone, and at one year, the longest I have had in my possession. And I'm proud about it because I lost all my five earlier cell phones—aside from my sanity—over bottles of beer.

I was not a rebel without a cause, though. Mine was a philosophical rebellion, or so I wanted to believe. But I was no Albert Camus—just a lousy drinker who wanted to look at the complexities of the world from the eyes of a drunk, using the booze as an excuse for talking about the things that I loved and hated and for laughing at myself over how stupid I could get. I believed no one would take me seriously because I was intoxicated.

But I'm no longer into that, hopefully. I'm beginning to realize that I'm not getting any younger, and that I can never fool the world. Maybe I should have told the girl that I'm trying to change for the better now, that at the back of this Bo's Coffee Club is the Study Lounge where I hide myself from the crowd, and that across the street is Cebu Doctor's Hospital where something big happened recently. But she doesn't know. She thinks I'm still the same wannabe lost in a sea of frustrated dreams.

What she said only reminds me of Holden, who wants to be a "catcher in the rye" to protect children playing in the field from falling over the cliff of adulthood with all its lies and pretenses. Maybe it's the reason I don't want to grow up. I hate to see myself looking dignified in a business suit, while deep within I am just one of the million egotistic bastards trying to climb the corporate ladder. But before somebody starts calling me a hypocrite, I have to say that I have nothing against rising to the top. It's only the pretenses and the lies that I hate, and it's their presence in me that I abhor most.

Holden is right after all. We adults are "phonies." We forsake our principles at the sight of economic and political benefits. We worry so much about how we look and we take so much pride in what we have and forget who we really are. We lie about ourselves in order to fit in, little knowing that by doing so we plunge over the cliff.

Now that I am a father to a baby girl born a month ago, I feel like I have fallen over the cliff, too. My life ahead remains uncertain. But I am no longer running away. I'm not saying, though, that I'm getting better than anybody because the truth is, I still have the same angst and the same fears. I'm still keeping my hair long, just for the heck of it, and any minute now I could burst out and shout in protest of the sudden increase in the price of my favorite brewed coffee.

To cut the crap, all I'm really saying is that I am hoping Holden is still there protecting my little Phoebe and the other kids from falling over the cliff, where adults like you and me are many, like these people coming inside the café.

Bernard Inocentes S. Garcia, 28, is a law graduate of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Winners all

"It is a sad fact that in Philippine elections, there is always no loser because everyone who lost his or her bid claims to have been cheated."

—Rep Eduardo Zialcita

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Using religion to justify violence

THIS IS A REACTION TO MINyong Ordoñez's High Blood article titled "God's gift of love" (PDI, 12/30/05), where he presented several views which I found shortsighted. In that very short article, Ordoñez managed to be wrong about many things.

The last time I checked, the Constitution of our republic is still secular and explicitly guarantees freedom of religion. Didn't Ordoñez think that if our nation were too barren a home for an atheist like me, who is not less a citizen than any other, then perhaps there is a fundamental problem with our society?

Ordoñez then went on to rant about communism without realizing that communism and atheism are two different carabaos. If we go by his logic, if the godless communists have been colossal failures, which implies that theism has triumphed, why then admit that world peace is still elusive? If we must extract a conclusion from this premise, it's this: world peace must not only be about atheism or communism. And by the same logic, ought we to call the Holocaust a Catholic experiment since Hitler and the Nazis were mostly Catholics? Of course, never mind that religion and the belief in God itself are just as divisive as any political ideology.

Ordoñez then went on to write about terrorism without bothering to acknowledge that today's terrorism, the kind attributed to the Abu Sayyaf, the IRA and al-Qaida, is being perpetrated not really by atheists but by people using their faith and religion to justify their acts.

Atheism and agnosticism are not on intellectually dead-end streets, contrary to Ordoñez's claim. In fact, by not believing, one gets a fresh outlook and a unique opportunity to question the fundamental assumptions that we have taken for granted as the absolutes handed down to us as dogma by religious authorities.

Living as an atheist or as an agnostic in the Philippines is not an impossible scenario either. The fact that there are atheists and agnostics, as he himself acknowledged, contradicts his very assertion. Reading his opinion is like reading a litany of ad hominems and appeals to emotion, but in the end one still wonders, what was Ordoñez's point really?

I can agree only with Ordoñez on one point: that one only needs "imagination to conceive God." There goes one very good reason why there are atheists and agnostics, and why we will continue to thrive—whether Ordoñez likes it or not.

—TONY BASA,
paetenian@yahoo.com

PAF leadership behind chain of command

THE BANNER STORY "CRACKS in AFP showing," which appeared in the INQUIRER's Jan. 22 issue under Dona Pazzibugan's byline, is filled with innuendoes and is clearly aimed at destroying my credibility as a commander faithful to the Constitution and the chain of command.

To begin with, the Philippine Air Force, in the spirit of transparency, agreed to a request of an INQUIRER correspondent to check on the condition of the PAF junior officers implicated in the July 2003 Oakwood incident. We wanted the public to know that these junior officers are well, contrary to rumors.

The gesture should never be associated with "perceptions of cracks within the top" leadership of the AFP. In fact, that leadership, which includes myself, is very much intact and strongly adheres to its constitutional mandate. It is totally unfair to the PAF leadership for anyone to equate the showing of the detained mutineers to the media (in the spirit of transparency) with the matter of leadership in the AFP.

Whoever gave Pazzibugan the slanted analysis, without doubt, wants to drive a wedge of distrust between the national leadership and the AFP's senior officers. Also, he or she clearly seeks to break the element of trust between the Commander in Chief, some senior officers and the PAF. The alleged military insider who provided the analysis must have had only malicious things in his or her mind, to say the least.

The PAF leadership's proven track record—under my last two predecessors and under the present leadership—speaks for itself. Save for a few junior officers (that we believe have been misled) who took part in the last mutiny, PAF officers and men have always remained true to their calling and mandate in the noble profession of arms. I can assure you that I have never been involved and will never be involved in any unconstitutional acts. Moreover, the command under my leadership has been very much focused on key activities in furtherance of the Philippine Defense Reform Program, a program that will further professionalize the AFP.

We appeal to everyone, including interested individuals and groups, to please refrain from using the AFP and, instead, to respect its apolitical stance. Doing so guarantees that the democratic processes we all subscribe to and protect will take their due course for the good of the majority. In any unrest, the first to suffer are our ordinary citizens, the very people we serve. Our desire to remain apolitical is right and serves the best interest of our country and our people. Help us live our lives as dedicated professional soldiers.

I would like to reassure our people that the PAF stands squarely behind the Constitution, our country and the chain of command.

—LT. GEN. JOSE L. REYES, AFP,
commanding general,
Philippine Air Force,
Col. Jesus Villamor Air Base,
Pasay City

Looking forward to a nation going to the birds

WE COULDN'T BE HAPPIER THAT Makati has gone to the birds! On behalf of all of our feathered friends, we want to thank this progressive city for becoming a bird sanctuary. ("Makati's the place to be if you're a bird," PDI, 1/7/06)

Birds are exquisite in their natural habitats. They are complex, social animals who gather in flocks from a few to thousands. Creating and nurturing an environment in which they have the ability to fly freely, socialize with other birds of their choosing and carry out the countless other instinctual and pleasurable behaviors without fear of being captured, killed or harmed, is the greatest gift that any city-dwelling animal can receive.

Thankfully, cities like Makati see birds as "neighbors," and have focused their energy and resources on treating them with respect. We hope other cities and towns will follow their example until the whole nation shall have gone to the birds. For more information on living with wildlife, please visit www.PETA.org.

—JASON BAKER,
director,
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta)-Asia Pacific,
andrewb@peta.org

History being repeated by different players

SIR, I AM A BRITISH CITIZEN who is now a permanent resident of the Philippines. Being British and fully aware of British history, particularly its darker side, gives me a view of Philippine current affairs from a different angle.

I refer to the news report headlined "US senators: Don't rule out military strike on Iran." (PDI, 1/17/06)

Back in the 19th century when the United Kingdom was the world's major—and, probably, the only—power, we had a kind of diplomacy that went like this: "Do as we tell you or we will kill you. We might kill you anyway." It was then—and it is now—a shameful abuse of power. However, the British have evolved past that.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely—it always did and it always will. History is bursting with examples. The United States is no different. On the contrary, that country reinforces the adage. (America by itself spends $59 out of every $100 spent by the entire world on armaments.) There's no point building up the most powerful military force in the world and not using it; if you don't use it, how can you justify it?

US Republican and Democratic senators, through Rep. Sen. John McCain, said that the United States "may ultimately have to undertake a military strike" (against Iran). Then he went on to say "that is a last option." What he failed to say—and recent wars undertaken by the United States bear this out—is that it is the only option. The United States has a recent history of giving options that go something like this: "Do as we say or we will bomb you out of existence," thus giving other nations two choices—capitulate or die. We, the British, did plenty of that sort of thing in the past so we know what it looks like when we see one.

I feel certain that the government of the Philippines, like that of the United Kingdom, will fall in line and do what it's told by Uncle Sam. The war against Iraq was widely seen as the "First Oil War." Iran looks increasingly like becoming the second.

I recall there was a man called Adolf Hitler going around Europe "liberating" nations, and a man called Tojo doing the same thing in Southeast Asia. Take a look at history and change a few names—things don't look too good.

—MICHAEL MOORE,
Blk 11 Lot 12, Ceanuri Camague,
Iligan City 9200

Grateful to the President

THIS IS TO CLARIFY THE NEWS item titled "GMA orders P66M given for Calapan City rehab" (PDI, 1/4/05), particularly the second to the last paragraph, which read in part: "Vice Gov. Estela Aceron noted that there was really nothing new with the President's visit."

The statement, attributed to me, seemed to downplay the enormous assistance and speedy response made by President Macapagal-Arroyo to help the flood victims in Oriental Mindoro. That was not my intention.

GMA visited Oriental Mindoro twice: the first time on Dec. 7, 2005; and the second on Jan. 3, 2006.

On Dec. 27, 2005, I chanced upon Madonna Virola (not Marciano Virola), who asked me about the latest news concerning the province. Gladly, I told her that GMA had approved the P66-million rehabilitation project/s for the province of Oriental Mindoro. This piece of news was later aired over radio and television.

On GMA's second visit, I received a text message from Virola asking me: "*Meron bang bago sa sinabi ni* GMA?" To this I replied, "*Wala namang bago. Pina*-expedite *niya* implementation of the rehabilitation project/s *ng* DPWH *at* NIA."

I did not elaborate on the P66-million project/s via text because I had already mentioned it to her, and it had also been explained during the dialogue with the President. Virola was in that dialogue. I did not expect that text message to be mentioned in the news as it was merely a casual answer to a casual question.

Thus, I was so surprised to read the text message which, as quoted, turned out to be ambiguous and misleading. It was certainly not meant to disparage the President's concern for the people of Oriental Mindoro, which she showed by immediately releasing the P66-million rehabilitation fund and by her directive to the Department of Public Works and Highways and the National Irrigation Agency to expedite the implementation of the projects.

To set the record straight, I wish to state that our constituents are sincerely grateful to GMA for her generous and immediate assistance. We reiterate our continuous, unwavering and full support for her.

—MA. ESTELA FELIPA M. ACERON,
vice governor,
Oriental Mindoro

When Vice Gov. Estela Aceron said "there was really nothing new with the President's visit," there was a qualifying statement in the report sent by our correspondent that said: "She simply ordered the DPWH and NIA to expedite the rehabilitation of the project and promised to release the funds." Unfortunately, this was deleted in the story although this was mentioned in the first paragraph. The fault is mine.

—FLOREÑO G. SOLMIRANO,
chief, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Poor program for the poor

I AM NOT AN ECONOMIST BUT an accountant. And I cannot see the wisdom in the poverty alleviation program of President Macapagal-Arroyo, an economist, where P35 billion of the people's savings will be reprogrammed to allow the purchase of noodles and rice for distribution to the poor. The funds would be better spent if used to start livelihood projects that could sustain the poor's daily needs.

But the Neda chief said he could not find the poorest of the poor although they are in abundance and very visible not only in Metro Manila but also all throughout the country. It's ridiculous that the Neda chief can't find them. (PDI, 1/10/06)

It would be better if the amount of P35 billion is realigned for the benefit of World War II veterans (pursuant to RA 6948, also known as the Disability Pension Act of 1999) and the teachers who are the lowest paid professionals in government.

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas was right when he said that a dole of noodles and rice to the poor would be a temporary solution to their hunger. Indeed, it will not solve the chronic and grave ills plaguing the country. And a stronger peso, although it increased our international dollar reserves, is not a sign that the country is ready for an economic takeoff, unless it translates to jobs for the jobless, homes for the homeless, and more food for the hungry.

When the government and private sector shall have provided jobs and Filipinos, including the professionals among them, shall have stopped going abroad for the proverbial greener pasture, then and only then can we safely say that the country has attained economic stability.

—GODOFREDO O. PETEZA SR.,
JP Rizal Street,
Barangay Camambugan,
Daet, Camarines Norte

INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Thursday, January 26, 2006

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	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5			Winner TV Shopping		Barclay's EPL				Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	S.O.S		Wala Yan Sa Lolo Ko		Big News	American Idol 5		Dukyu	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins	Meteor Garden Season 2	TV Patrol World	Gulong Ng Palad	Mga Anghel Na Walang Langit	Only You	Vietnam Rose	Forbidden Love	Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season II)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		Mondo Magic	Samsung Sports World	Lost		24		Worst Case Scenario		Fear Factor (Season IV)		The World's Wildest Commercials	The World's Wildest Commercials	The Contender	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Powerpuff Girls	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door		The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy		Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Energy Bomb	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinema One		Salawahan				Bahid				Now That I Have You				Magic To Love				Calvento Files	
Cinemax		King Ralph			Dark Skies: The Awakening			How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days				Mindwarp			The Snow Walker (9:35 PM)				Hudson Hawk
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Discovery Channel		Wild Weather: Heat		The Greatest Ever Fighter Planes		Building The Ultimate		Walking With Prehistoric Beasts		Extreme Engineering		The Ultimates		Mythbusters		The Greatest Ever Helicopters		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Ad Attack/Un-[illegible] Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie McGuire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN						Pro Billiards 2005 Men's World Summit of Pool		Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Sportscenter Asia	World Tenpin Masters '05		Pool Snooker Mosconi Cup 2005		Pro Billiards '05 BCA Open 9-Ball [illegible] Singles		Sportscenter Asia
ETC				Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation, God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil, Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr. Mitch Pacwa		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	Date With Tiffany		Dragonball Z	Slam Dunk	Frog Prince	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Sugo	Etheria	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		To The Ends Of The Earth			Who's The Boss? II	Bewitched IV	The Nanny	Strong Medicine		Judging Amy		Case Of White Chapel Vampire			Judging Amy (10:[illegible]PM)		Strong Medicine
HBO			True Believer				Mermaids			Iron Eagle				Radio			Congo (10:45PM)		
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		Outrageous	Chik Factor	The Scene	IBC News Tonight	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show With David Letterman		Smackdown				Jiu	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Arrested Development	The Late Show With David Letterman		The Late Show With David Letterman	Comedy Central Presents	South Park	The Man Show
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Good Finds	Life & Style		E! True Hollywood Story		Road & Track	Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	MTV Hits	MTV Cribs	MTV Hits		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc		MTV Hits			Aeon Flux	MTV Hits	Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New	MTV Hits	VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News		Star MYX	MYXILOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell	Egypt Detectives: Mystery of The Pharaoh's Stone	Mosquito Hell		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Megastructures		Explorations Powered By Duracell: Storm Front and [illegible]/Primal Fear/Mood Food	Storm Stories S7 "Sumo Slides/Boscastle Flood"
NBN		Value Vision		Value Vision		Teledyaryo	Dyos Ko, Mahal Ko Ba Sila?	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo				Network Forum		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	Hey Arnold!	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	Drake & Josh	The Fairly Odd Parents	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Chalkzone	The Wild Thornberrys	The Angry Beavers	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Wasakin Ang Sindikato				Despedida				Salamat Sa Lolo				Humanap Ka Ng Pangit				Isang Araw Isang Buhay
Qtv		Bodyguard	[illegible] Hungry Heart	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Hotelier	All In	Laugh To Laugh Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		News On Q	Women's Desk		MINT (Music Interactive)	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Hey Arnold!	Wild Thornberrys	Sponge Bob	As Told By Ginger	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		The Ultimate Fighter		Revelations		Newswatch Now	Video Hit Parade	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng [illegible]		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports		Denmark Open Men's Singles Finals		Copenhagen Masters 2005		GWS Ep.55-2005	NBA Game Kings @ 76ers					Sportsdesk	NBA Jam	NBA Game Timberwolves @ Grizzlies					NBA Inside Stuff
Sports Plus	NBA Game Memphis @ Miami					Party Poker.com World Open 2005				SMB Poker Bar Tour 4	BD Bora Bora	Superbowl Stories 4		World Game		AFC and NFC Championship Games			
Star Movies		Pirates Of The Caribbean: Curse Of Black Pearl					Class Action				Uptown Girls (7:25 PM)			Runaway Jury				Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle (11:10PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol 2006	Whose Line Is It Anyway?	Angel		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol 2006	8 Simple Rules	The Drew Carey Show: Scrubs (Series 2)	Less Than Perfect	Man Vs. Beast		Friends	Scrubs
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monsters		UAAP				Batman Beyond	Spirits	Wazzup Wazzup	The Contender		Alias (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives		News Central	Oprah		Salt

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

First Mass site in Luzon marked

By Gina Rodriguez
Magallanes, Sorsogon

AT 73, ROGERIO ESCOBAL continues to travel to the heart of his hometown, Magallanes, in Sorsogon, whose waters he beholds for hosting a lively marine community—from coral reefs to different species of fish, crustaceans and mollusks.

Of this place he enthuses: "Its lively underwater activity and psychedelic gardens are attractive and enjoyable parks for marine life. Underneath lie submerged coral reefs that stretch toward the deepest seabeds."

A certified public accountant, Escobal is a local history buff whose summer visits to his native town in recent years spurred him into new pursuits—research and writing.

A municipality of 34 barangays, Magallanes sits at the mouth of Sorsogon Bay at the southernmost part of Luzon. It is an hour's jeepney drive through zigzag concrete roads from Sorsogon City after a bus trip of 12-13 hours from Manila. On a clear day, it's a breezy and quiet ride to the countryside, where often only one other vehicle is trailing the narrow road network.

One of 16 towns of the province, Magallanes (total land area: 14,780 hectares, pop.: 31,315) is bounded on the west by Ticao Pass, on the north by Sorsogon Bay, on the east by the town of Juban and on the south by the town of Bulan.

In a slim volume published in limited copies for his town-mates in 2002, "Magallanes, (Gibalon) Revisited," Escobal deems the town as a fishing paradise where the Augustinian missionaries celebrated the first Mass in Luzon in 1569.

Research

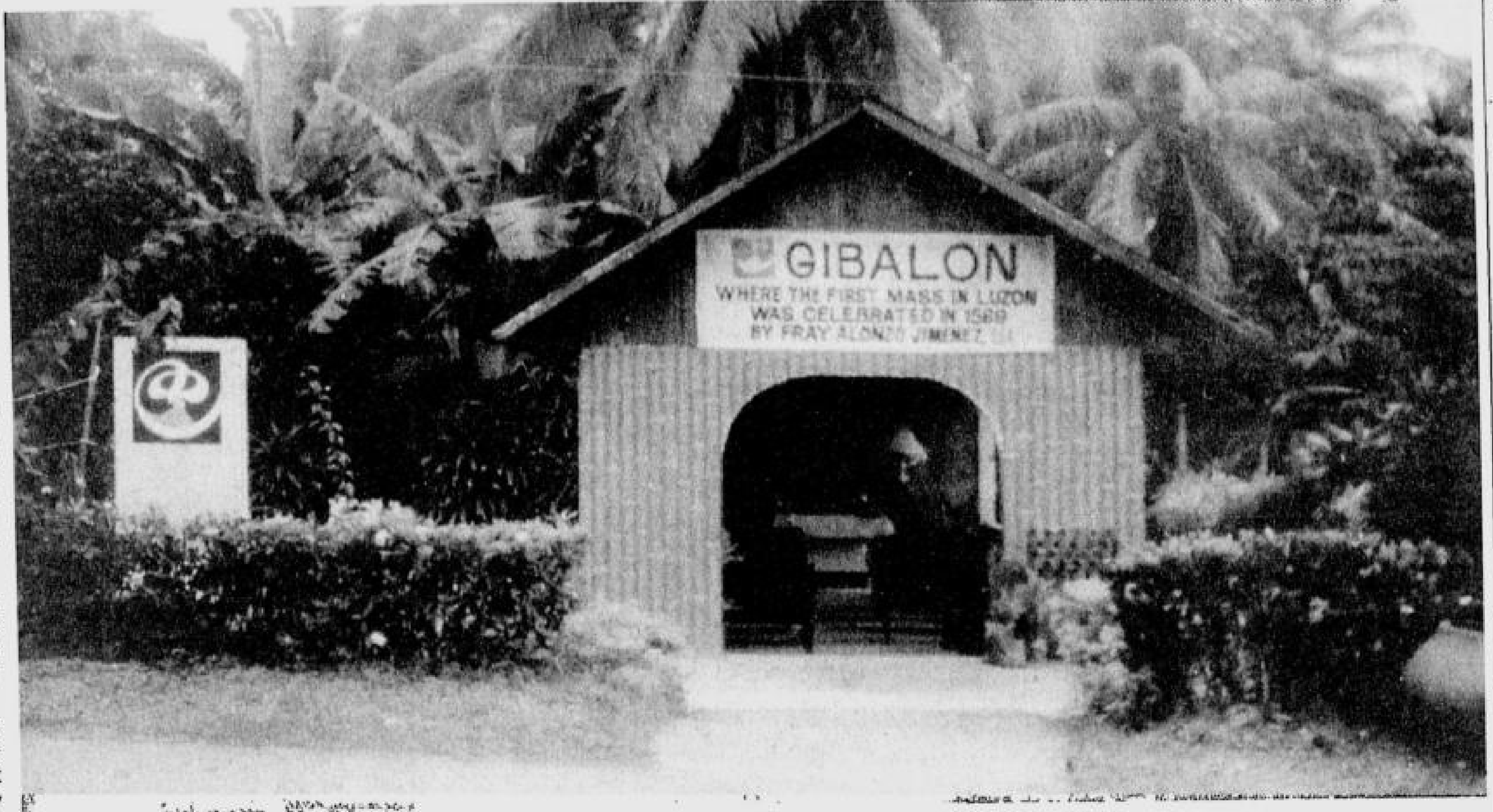
Escobal's first try at writing local history would be followed by research on other aspects of his hometown's past, among them: "The Malaspina Expedition and the Pacific Islands," "The Bagatao Island and the Shipyard," and "Ibalon: The Folk Epic of Bicolandia—A Fragment."

Town-mates, including civic-oriented organizations and municipal officials led by Mayor Roque Carranza, have taken pride in Escobal's efforts at ensuring that the historical legacy of the town would be appreciated by the present generation.

However, some questions that have cropped up in the course of his research for his first book continue to absorb him and provide a springboard for more studies, specifically the site of the first Mass in Luzon.

His first title explores Fr. Alonso Jimenez and Spanish Captain Luis Enriquez de Guzman's voyage to Gibalon/Ibalon, as ancient Magallanes was known, to be able to establish the first Christian settlement in Luzon.

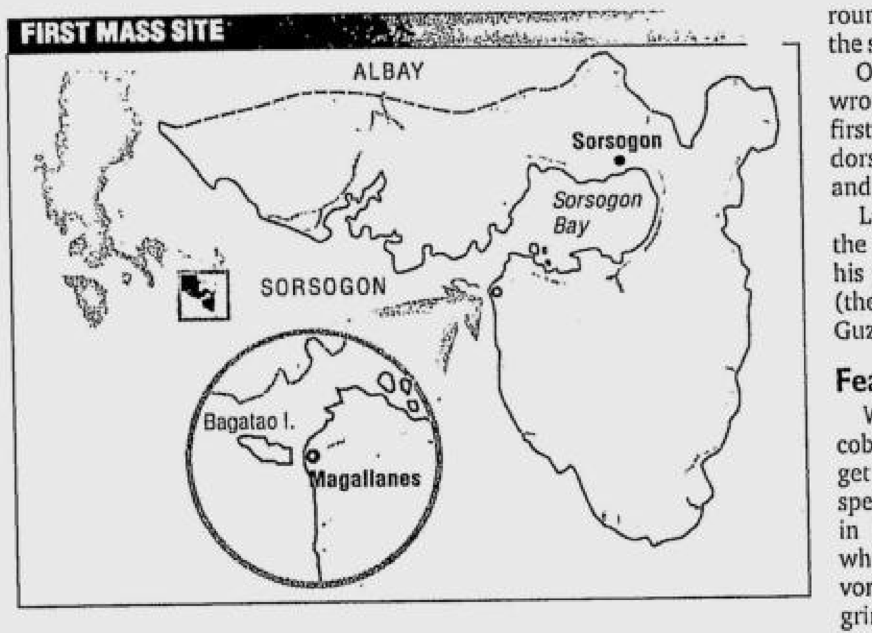
"Coming from Oton, Panay with brief stopovers in Leyte, Samar, Masbate and Burias Island and across Ticao Pass to Sorsogon province, the missionary group of Jimenez reached Ginangra (a barangay of present-day Magallanes) and landed at the ancient fishing village of Ibalon. Here on the shore of Ibalon, Jimenez celebrated the first Mass in Luzon," Escobal avers in the book.



THE Gibalon Chapel bears a marker of the "site" of the first Mass in Luzon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

FIRST MASS SITE



RESEARCHER Rogerio Escobal visits the Siuton River near the marker.

Chapel

Present-day provincial and church authorities have joined hands to build a modest chapel in Sitio Gibalon in Barangay Siuton to designate the site of the first Mass. The chapel stands on a hilly terrain by the side of the lonely Magallanes Bulan road.

Escobal says this "site" is an interior part of the Ibalon of 1569 and it would be very dangerous for foreigners to travel to an unknown place that is more than a kilometer away from the shore. He asserts that the shore is logically the site for the first Mass in Luzon.

The shore of Ibalon is specifically "situated at the mouth of the Gibalon (Ginangra) River, now Sitio San Isidro, Barangay Salvacion, on the western coast of the present-day town of Magallanes in the province of Sorsogon."

Armed with primary documentary evidence consisting of dated maps and records, Escobal sought acknowledgment for this position in a series of communications with the National Historical Institute from April to December last year.

The historical agency, headed by Ambeth Ocampo, has replied that it may conduct an activity such as a round-table discussion or survey of the site.

On Sept. 1 last year, Ocampo wrote that the conference on the first Mass in Luzon should be endorsed to the NHI board for advice and proper action.

Last December, Escobal pressed the NHI for action by resubmitting his position paper on the "landfall" (the first sight of land) of the De Guzman-Jimenez expedition.

Fearless journey

Well in his advanced years, Escobal still keeps a burning desire to get proper authorities to see his perspective on the site of the first Mass in Luzon. It is a fearless journey which he undertakes with much fervor even as he continues to do the grind as consultant for Pragmatic Development and Construction Inc., a post he has held since 1998.

He is also senior vice president for E. M. Ramos and Sons Inc., for whom he has been working since 1953. His stint affords him the chance to travel to parts of Asia, the United States, and Europe and observe the cultural legacies in these parts.

One of nine children of parents who lived off the sea's bounties, Escobal is only one of three siblings who managed to afford a college degree.

He knows the hard life of a fisherman and regales listeners on how until his high school years he was doing nightly rounds guarding the fish corals built by his father, a master builder of deep sea fish corals.

Local history has few voices but Escobal, ever the brave spirit, has not stopped hoping there would be earnest listeners.

College grad wants to become world boxing champ

By Madonna T. Virola
City of Calapan

CELEBRITY BOXER MANNY Pacquiao, with his determination and no-surrender attitude, has inspired a rising boxer in Occidental Mindoro.

"At first, I was ashamed of being a boxer because people look down on boxers. But now, Filipino boxers are known worldwide," says 23-year-old Drian "Jong" H. Francisco, a native of Barangay Buenavista in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro.

Unlike many boxers who have not completed formal schooling and are after the money prize, Jong is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Commerce but is pursuing a career in boxing to continue his father's dream of becoming a world champion.

"I have been yearning for it because I grew up watching my father engaged in boxing. I also trained at an early age," Jong claims.

He admits though that he pities his losing opponents. "But I forget pity while in the ring," he says.

Jong has turned professional, sporting a no-loss record from his amateur matches.

A town-mate, Bong Marquez, says, Jong "was unanimously favored" by the judges during his six-round fight against Manny Paquian (National Capital Region's titleholder) in the flyweight division on Oct. 29, 2005 at the Elorde Sports Center in Mandaluyong City.

He garnered 65 wins in amateur boxing and has won four in professional bouts, including two knockouts. His last fight was on Dec. 10, 2005 at the Yñarez Coliseum against Johary Rosia from Negros.

School winner

Jong's father, former boxing world contender Diomedes "Joe" Francisco, supports him. Jong had long been exposed to boxing since his father was at the height of his career.

"My parents said I was already boxing even when I was still in the cradle. I want to accomplish what my father failed to do—be world champion," Jong says.

When he gets old, he doesn't want to regret having not tried to be a world champion, he says.

Jong won all boxing competitions in school. Three times, he was named "Athlete of the Year" in his school.

He brought home two gold medals from boxing in the Southern Tagalog Regional Athletic Association (Straa).

His father brought him to places, especially during fiesta time and boxing competitions were held. Sometimes, he himself scheduled boxing matches.

While in college, Jong had to transfer from his Adventist school, which does not approve of boxing and adheres to the principle of nonviolence, to another school, also in Sablayan. As an Adventist, though, he keeps his faith by praying.

"I would study very hard during the first two quarters in school so I wouldn't fail because my training fell on the third and fourth quarters," Jong says.

Friendships in boxing

He is grateful to his father, a fire chief in Sta. Cruz town (also in Occidental Mindoro), who sends him P4,000 per month to support his training. "Otherwise, as a professional I should be the one giving them money."

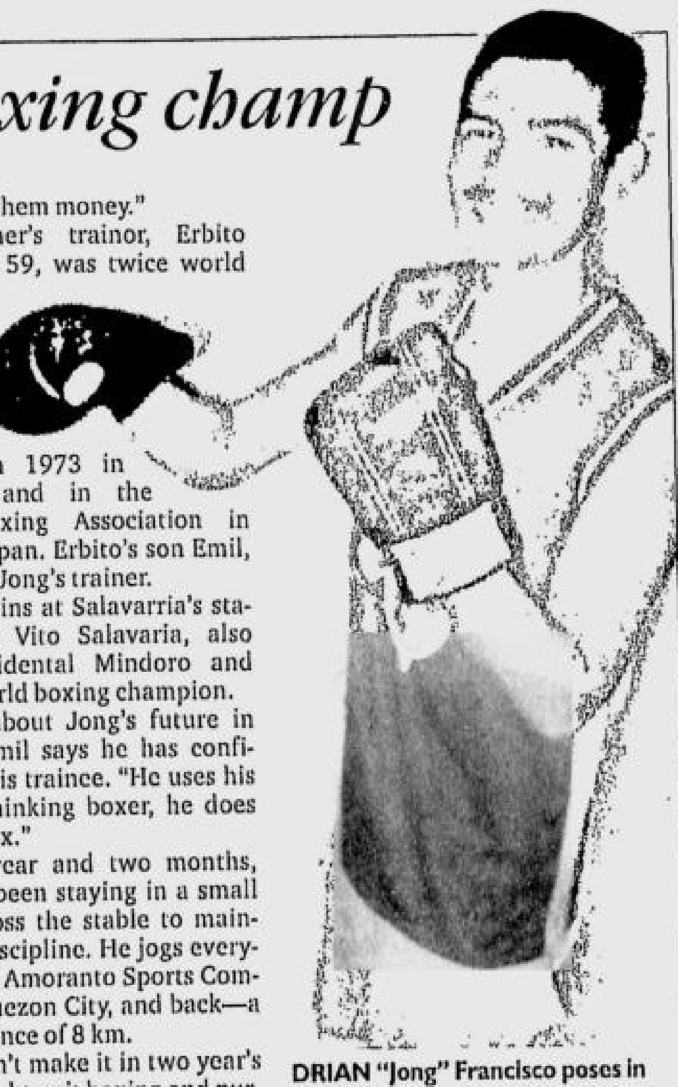
His father's trainor, Erbito Salavarria, 59, was twice world champion, claiming titles in the World Boxing Council in 1973 in Thailand and in the World Boxing Association in 1975 in Japan. Erbito's son Emil, 30, is now Jong's trainer.

Jong trains at Salavarria's stable under Vito Salavaria, also from Occidental Mindoro and former world boxing champion.

Asked about Jong's future in boxing, Emil says he has confidence in his trainee. "He uses his head, a thinking boxer, he does not just box."

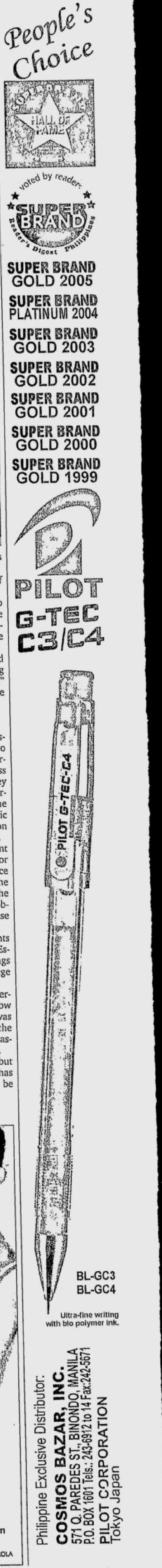
For a year and two months, Jong has been staying in a small room across the stable to maintain his discipline. He jogs everyday to the Amoranto Sports Complex in Quezon City, and back—a total distance of 8 km.

"If I don't make it in two year's time, I might quit boxing and pursue another career," he says.



DRIAN "Jong" Francisco poses in the gym where he trains.

MADONNA T. VIROLA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PNP chief says 'jueteng' continues

MAHIRAP NA MAG-SALITA!

By Luigi del Puerto

DESPITE REPEATED WARNINGS, SOME LOCAL police chiefs appear to be defying direct orders of the Philippine National Police leadership to eradicate the illegal numbers game "jueteng."

The police also lamented that the antijueteng campaign has been largely carried out with little or no support from local governments.

"This is my last warning," Director General Arturo Lomibao told field officers yesterday, noting that jueteng has resurfaced in "many areas in Luzon."

"Confidential reports reaching me stated that there is a resurgence of jueteng in many areas of Luzon," Lomibao said in a statement read by police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil.

Millions of pesos in payoffs from jueteng operators have found their way to local and national politicians and police officers who, in turn, use their influence to protect the multibillion-peso racket, congressional inquiries and independent reports have showed.

Officials said this practice has been stopped, but no ranking politician or senior officer implicated in the illegal numbers game has been sent to jail. No "jueteng lord" has also been jailed to date.

"Be reminded of my one strike policy and no take policy and that I will relieve the chief of police who will persist in violating the same as I have done in the past," Lomibao told ground commanders.

Under police rules, a police chief is automatically sacked if a separate police unit, such as the Anti-Illegal Gambling Special Operations Task Force, successfully operates against jueteng in his territory.

Lomibao warned that a provincial director with three relieved chiefs of police will be sacked, and a regional director with three relieved provincial directors will suffer the same fate.

"We have many qualified and competent officers who are waiting to be assigned (to police stations) and who can obey simple orders (and) simple instructions," he said.

Bataoil said the police have received reports that local officers do not act on information relayed to them by residents about jueteng operations.

"Lomibao is irked," Bataoil said. "We received reports that some chiefs of police do not act, (despite) referrals made by their constituents and the media."

Bataoil also strongly hinted that local politicians are uncooperative, and as a result, the police are having a difficult time sustaining their gains against the vice.

"If only mayors can help their chiefs of police. If only other sectors of the community can help their police, I think we can sustain our antigambling (campaign)," the spokesperson said.

"The police are all out (against jueteng), but we are encountering some problems. After some period ... they (operators) come back somewhere," he said.

The antijueteng unit based in Camp Crame is busy validating reports and following up leads, he said, adding that sooner or later, the unit will catch up with negligent officers.

'Jueteng' men won't spill beans on who financed them

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—They were chased down muddy rice fields, jailed and humiliated on national television, but "jueteng" workers still would not reveal the names of gambling lords who financed their botched operations here.

On Tuesday, it was the turn of about 150 *cabo* (head bet collectors), who went to the house of Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena, to serve as protectors of gambling lords who bankrolled the month-long operation of jueteng here.

"*Para nyo na rin kaming ginisa sa sarili naming mantika* (For you to force us to reveal who they are would be like getting us fried in our fat)," James Cadelina, 33, the group's leader, told priests in a dialogue at the conference hall of the clergy house in Barangay Luyang here.

The group, composed of men and women from eight towns where jueteng used to operate, again failed to see Villena—their second attempt in five days—as the bishop was out for an official engagement, Church officials said.

The bet collectors blamed Villena for the halt to jueteng here, and demanded jobs.

"We would like to ask him to stop opposing jueteng. He's the only one against it," said Cadelina.

They narrated how difficult their lives had been since jueteng stopped on Jan. 17.

"We're starving. We do not have money to buy food," said Petronila Latina, a *cabo* from Bambang.

"My children are mad at me because I can't give them money to go to school," said Tony Valdez of Bayombong.

WANTED
LANCE CORPORAL KIETH SILKWOOD
ARREST ERRING US TROOPS NOW!
-BAYAN
WANTED
LANCE CORPORAL DANIEL SMITH
GLORIA IPAARESTO ANG MGA KANONG NANGGAHASA!

A POSTER featuring a camouflaged American soldier serves as a backdrop for a protester demanding Philippine custody of US troopers charged with raping a Filipina in Subic in one of dozens of protest rallies against US custody of the accused Americans.

PDI PHOTO

N. Cotabato execs join clamor for RP custody of GIs in rape

COTABATO CITY—NORTH COTABATO OFFICIALS have urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to suspend the antiterror exercises involving American troops in Carmen town if the United States refuses to turn over to Philippine custody the American soldiers charged with the rape of a Filipina in Subic.

The court handling the rape case had issued warrants for the arrest of the US servicemen but the US Embassy insisted that, under the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), it has the right to custody of the accused US troops.

In a manifesto, the provincial officials, led by Gov. Emmanuel Piñol, on Tuesday said the province could not play host to soldiers of a nation that insults the Filipino people.

"What if, God forbid, a similar case would happen during the conduct of the Balance Piston exercises in our province? Would the US government turn over the suspects to our local courts? With the Luzon case as a precedent, the answer is most probably no."

"We cannot allow this to happen because in this little place we call home, we have always believed that no one is above the law," said the position paper.

At least 35 American and 60 Filipino soldiers are taking part in the month-long military exercises dubbed as Balance Piston 06-02.

"The US government should respect our sovereignty as a nation and immediately turn over the American soldiers charged with rape to the jurisdiction of Philippine courts," the officials said in the manifesto.

"If the US government continues to display arrogance in this case, then we will refuse the conduct of future Balikatan exercises in the province of North Cotabato," they said. *Jeoffrey Maitem and Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Dads seek stop to low-level flights

ANGELES CITY—THE CITY COUNCIL PASSED a resolution asking US military officials to stop making low-level and night flights in this city (pop: 400,000) during war games, saying these were causing "unnecessary panic, apprehension and inconvenience" among residents.

The council was asked to consider an ordinance banning such flights over the city's populated villages not only by the US military but also by the Philippine Air Force and commercial airlines.

"These flights are a serious concern to our residents," Councilor Jay Sangil, the resolution's sponsor, said.

He said these were raised as Filipino and American troops held new exercises.

The appeal and the proposed ban came as an OV-10 plane of the PAF crashed in Paombong, Bulacan, on Tuesday. The council also took into account the crashes of two PAF planes in the city's neighboring town of Mabalacat in 1999 and 2001 and the emergency landing by a US Marine Corps F/A 18 Hornet in 2000.

A copy of the resolution will be sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom) and the US Embassy in Manila. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Lawmakers asked to investigate oil spill off Semirara

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—CONGRESS WAS asked yesterday to investigate the oil spill from a power barge that threatens marine life in Semirara town in Antique.

The Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya) also asked the National Power Corp. (Napocor) to coordinate with the military so soldiers on Panay Island and Mindoro would be pulled out and help in the cleanup drive.

"We are asking Congress to conduct a full-blown investigation. It could be the House committee on natural resources. We have no trust on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the office of the President, so they should not intervene in the investigation," said Gerry Corpuz, Pamalakaya information officer.

He said the group wants the source and "end-user" of the bunker fuel identified to make them also liable for the spill, along with Napocor.

Corpuz said they wanted to know why Napocor did not disclose where the fuel came from and where it should be delivered.

The Pamalakaya, he added, suspected that Napocor only wanted to own up to the destruction brought about by the oil spill to protect its clients.

Corpuz said they were counting on the party-list representatives of Bayan-Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela to heed their call.

Ignacio de la Flor, Coast Guard deputy commander in Western Visayas, said the barge was being towed by a tugboat on its way to Oriental Mindoro from Masbate when it was battered by strong winds and waves.

He said nearly 200,000 liters of bunker fuel had contaminated 236 hectares of mangroves and 40 sq km of marine life off the coast of Semirara Island.

Execs, villagers complain of slow resettlement in Aurora

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

DINGALAN, AURORA—ENVIRONMENT OFFICIALS on Tuesday turned over to social welfare workers 238,492 board feet of lumber for distribution to 776 families who have yet to be resettled since landslides hit the town in 2004.

"Our resettlement has taken so slow. What government did to the victims of Mt. Pinatubo's eruptions (in 1991) is much faster," said Cesar Martin, chair of the Multi-Sectoral Group of Dingalan, before the turnover rites at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources office here.

Martin's group sits in the oversight committee organized by the DENR and the Department of Social Welfare and Development to monitor the distribution of lumber from logs retrieved by the DENR's Natural Resources Development Corp. (NRDC) through a contractor, the Siriporn Enterprises.

Assistant Environment Secretary Vicente Paragas supervised the turnover.

Gov. Bellaflor Angara, Regidor de Leon, DENR Central Luzon executive director, and Margarita Sampang, DSWD regional director, confirmed the delay in the resettlement efforts but ruled out irregularities.

Angara said the snail-paced construction of houses were due to lack of lands not prone to earthquakes and landslides.

Lack of funds

De Leon said the delay was also due to Siriporn having only a mini-sawmill.

For lack of money, the NRDC could not afford to hire a big sawmill to hasten the cutting of logs, he said.

As payment for its services, Siriporn would get 1,200 cubic meters of logs from out of almost 5,000 cu m of retrieved stock.

Martin and Editha Hailar of the Dingalan Calamity Victim Association said 30,000 board feet of lumber, in the care of the local government, have been missing from the inventory.

Mayor Jaime Ylarde said he would look into the report of Martin and Hailar.

A supposed beneficiary, Leopoldo Salvador, has submitted an affidavit claiming he did not receive 1,599 board feet of lumber from the town government.

Martin said the pieces of lumber were being diverted for sale outside Dingalan. He declined to say who were behind the sale of logs ordered retrieved by the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC).

Transparency

During the program, Angara demanded transparency from the local government, DENR, DSWD and Siriporn to "erase the image of corruption that Dingalan has earned from media reports."

She also asked the government agencies to give more power to the oversight committee to monitor the distribution of lumber to homeless families.

She urged big landowners in Dingalan to donate sites or sell these at more affordable prices.

A RESIDENT of Dingalan, Aurora returns to what is left of her home shortly after Typhoon "Yoyong" slammed the town in December 2004.

PDI PHOTO

METRO

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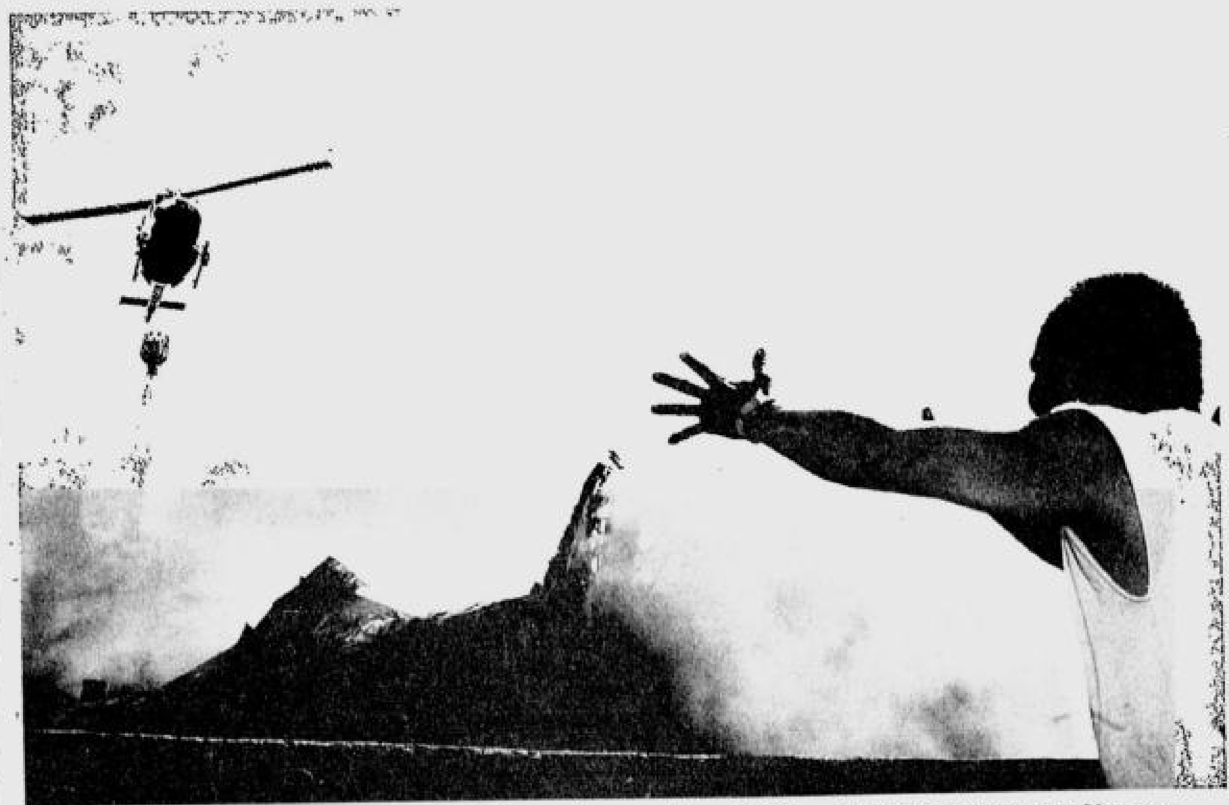


A HELICOPTER pours water over a chemicals warehouse on fire at TS Cruz Subdivision, Barangay Almanza Uno, Las Piñas City. No one was hurt, but property damage was estimated at P10 million. REM ZAMORA

Fire hits Las Piñas warehouse

By Jocelyn R. Uy

BARELY 24 HOURS AFTER MORE than 50 houses burned down in Las Piñas on Tuesday, another fire broke out in a warehouse in the city on Gladiola Street, T. S. Cruz Subdivision, Barangay Almanza Uno.

The fire, which was first reported at 10:15 a.m. yesterday, started at the warehouse of Rich Chemical Enterprise, a company engaged in the manufacture and refilling of paint thinner and muriatic acid.

City fire marshal Senior Insp. Robert Pacis said the owners, Po Yeng and Lily Ong, were inside the warehouse when they saw flames near the metal drums which contained the chemicals.

"The Ongs panicked so they immediately left the building," said Pacis, adding that they had received a call about the fire from Patrol 117.

"The fire spread quickly because of the chemicals inside the building," according to Southern Police District fire marshal Sofia Mendoza.

Firemen had to use Aqua Use Fill Forming Foaming (A Triple F), a chemical, to put out the fire. A helicopter was also used to douse the flames with water.

Federico Sambilon, the warehouse's security guard, told the INQUIRER that the company's 17 employees were on a break when the incident happened. "I just saw the warehouse already in flames. But I did not hear any explosion," Sambilon said.

Firemen have yet to talk to the Ong couple about details concerning the fire. Media persons later learned that Lily had to be rushed to the hospital because her blood pressure rose.

Mendoza pegged the damage to property at around P10 million.

The INQUIRER learned that people living near the warehouse had asked the city government last year to transfer the company to another site because it allegedly emitted hazardous smoke and a foul odor.

Pacis confirmed that the company had been the subject of complaints in the past. "We are going to check the establishment's permits and other pertinent documents," the city fire marshal added.

As of press time yesterday, firemen were still putting out the fire although it had been declared under control at 2 p.m.

Jaylo surrender unlikely – lawyer

By Tina G. Santos

REYNALDO JAYLO, THE CONTROVERSIAL chief of the disbanded Presidential Anti-Illegal Recruitment Task Force (PAIRTF) who is wanted by authorities for six counts of serious illegal detention, has no plans to surrender.

Jaylo's lawyer, Frank Chavez, said it was not necessary for the former police officer to present himself in court just yet.

"At this point, it is not necessary because the rule says my appearance as his counsel was already a voluntary submission to the jurisdiction of the court," Chavez, a former Solicitor General, told reporters yesterday.

Asked if Jaylo had sent surrender feelers, Chavez said: "As of now, it's out of the question. We're going to avail ourselves of all legal remedies."

Chavez also refused to say whether or not his client was still in the country, saying he had not been in contact with Jaylo.

"He has no contact with his family or anybody else. The last time we talked was in December when he pleaded with me not to stop representing him," Chavez said.

The lawyer yesterday asked Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 28 Judge Nina Antonio-Valenzuela to put off the implementation of the arrest warrant she issued against Jaylo on Dec. 29. The judge had specified that no bail would be recommended for the accused "because he was charged with several counts of a capital offense."

"We're asking the court to review the basis of its order finding probable cause and issuing the warrant of arrest against Jaylo. There is no probable cause, therefore the case should be dismissed," Chavez said. He alleged that some persons—"from some members of the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation), the CIDG (Criminal Investigation and Detection Group), some officers of the DOJ (Department of Justice) and a member of the Cabinet"—obviously wanted to put his client in jail without due process.

JAYLO: Where is he?

But Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco yesterday countered Chavez's argument that there was no need for Jaylo to surrender since the lawyer had already appeared in court.

"There is no such thing as appearance through counsel because the court cannot convict the lawyer," Velasco said.

"Under the law, nobody can ask for any positive verdict from the court unless the court has acquired jurisdiction over the case and over the person or the accused," Velasco added. "In this case, Jaylo remains in hiding. He must first surrender before he can ask for positive relief from this court."

Apart from the warrant of arrest, the court had also put out a hold departure order preventing Jaylo from leaving the country.

Jaylo was charged in a Manila court after the NBI raided the PAIRTF headquarters and found eight persons, all suspected illegal recruiters, in detention. The DOJ said Jaylo had no authority to detain persons after July 9, 2005, since Malacañang had failed to renew the mandate of the task force.

METROBRIEFS

Passenger kills jeepney driver

A JEEPNEY driver was shot dead on Tuesday afternoon by one of his passengers in Marikina City. Aniceto Edora, 47, was shot twice in the head by the unidentified suspect who was seated behind him, PO3 Felixberto Aguila told the INQUIRER. Edora was the president of a tricycle drivers and operators association in Barangay Concepcion Dos, Marikina City. His group was reportedly involved in a turf war against tricycle drivers and operators in nearby Barangay Cupang, Antipolo City. Marikina police chief Senior Supt. Manuel Gaerlan said the victim had been getting death threats before the incident. He added that they were still investigating if the dispute could have motivated the killing. "But we are still looking at other angles," he added.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Suspected illegal recruiter arrested

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has arrested a suspected illegal recruiter who was able to dupe over 100 people of more than P5 million in placement fees. Editha Gascon, 42, was arrested during an entrapment at D' Lamplight Manpower Agency on Leveriza Street, Malate, Manila, last week. NBI officer-in-charge Nestor Mantaring said Gascon was brought to the Manila City Prosecutor's Office for more than 100 counts of estafa and for violating Republic Act 8042 or the Migrant Workers Act. The complainants' lawyer, Rosario Galit, said the suspect had "misrepresented herself as a broker of prospective employers in Taiwan, Dubai, Korea and Hong Kong." She added that Gascon was able to convince the victims to apply for work abroad, promising them jobs as caregivers, factory workers, and domestic helpers. "Gascon was credible because she was fluent in Korean, Cantonese and Arabic," Galit said, adding that the victims believed she had connections abroad because she easily switched from one language to another.

Margaux C. Ortiz

Alleged victims of kidnap gang turn up

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TEN MORE ALLEGED VICTIMS OF A kidnap-for-ransom group, which targeted Indians in eastern Metro Manila and Rizal province, have gone to the police to file complaints against alleged members of the gang.

Marikina City Police chief Senior Supt. Manuel Gaerlan yesterday said he expects more victims to show up in the next few days.

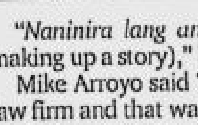
Three members of the kidnap-for-ransom gang were arrested on Tuesday in San Mateo, Rizal, in a police raid. Arrested were Romeo Jimenez , the alleged gang leader; Onkar Singh, who was reportedly the group's "tipster;" and Ben Torrefil. Another suspect, Joel Royo, died after he allegedly traded shots with policemen. The police also rescued an Indian trader, Karnail Singh Chahal who was kidnapped by the suspects earlier. Chahal said the suspects had demanded P5 million in ransom from his family.

The victims claimed the kidnap group had been preying on members of the Indian community in Metro Manila for over a year now.

'Ang bayaw na hilaw ni' Mike Arroyo

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo



DURING A HEARING ON THE NATIONAL BUDget the other day, opposition senators took turns scolding Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales for the smuggling activities of the siblings Vicky and Tom Toh at the piers.

Morales could only squirm in his seat as he received brickbats from the senators. He said he was still new in his post and that he would look into the report that came out in this corner on Jan. 14.

In fairness to Morales, he's still groping in the dark. My customs sources say he's doing everything to meet the collection target.

But he's also playing it safe when he deals with cargo reportedly belonging to the siblings Vicky and Tom Toh. Morales is playing it by ear, so to speak.

Vicky and Tom Toh have been lording it over the piers since President Macapagal-Arroyo took over in 2001. During the time of former President Estrada, Tom was just a small-time importer, bringing in items for his hardware store. He was not known in the piers.

But Tom hit the jackpot after Estrada was ousted from office and replaced by Ms Arroyo. He has become a big-time importer (read: smuggler) at the piers.

People at the customs bureau fear Tom. When cargo purportedly belonging to Vicky and Tom is intercepted by customs examiners, the mere mention of Tom's name sends shivers down the spines of the examiners.

"*Huwag mo nang pakialaman yan, kung 'di mo gusto ma*-assign *sa* Tawi-Tawi (Don't touch it if you don't want to be assigned to Tawi-Tawi)," an official reportedly told an overzealous customs examiner.

Tom is called "*ang bayaw na hilaw ni FG*" (FG's fake brother-in-law)) by people at the piers. "FG" refers to First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

I told Mike Arroyo, a close friend (I wonder if he still considers me a friend after this), about what customs people had told me about the Toh siblings. But FG, perhaps blinded by love (they say love is blind, don't they?) would dismiss the reports.

"*Naninira lang ang mga yun, Mon* (They're making up a story)," he would say.

Mike Arroyo said Tom Toh was a client of his law firm and that was probably the reason many people were jealous of Tom.

Tom and Vicky especially hold sway at the Harbor Center adjacent to the North Harbor. Harbor Center is owned by Regis Romero, a crony of former President Ramos.

From 2001 up to 2004 (or when Ms Arroyo was already President), when there were allegations that it was a haven for smugglers, Harbor Center didn't have any customs examiner assigned to it.

Every day, for three years, highly dutiable cargo was unloaded from ocean-going vessels at the Harbor Center. The steel, wood, cement, flour and resin shipments were reportedly brought in by Vicky and Tom.

Through the Junn Brokerage firm, the Tohs reportedly paid only minimal taxes and duties of their cargo through under-valuation. "What can we do, Mon? Tom always mentions the name of the First Gentleman," a customs official told me.

Why didn't they check this with Mr. Arroyo, I asked. They replied that Tom, a name dropper, was probably telling the truth because of reports in the newspapers about the alleged relationship between Vicky Toh and Mike Arroyo.

AMRSP

Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines
28 Acacia Street, New Manila, 1112 Quezon City
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AMRSP JOINT BOARD STATEMENT ON THE SUBIC RAPE CASE

The Members of the Joint Executive Board of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines express their wholehearted support for the Woman Rape Victim of Subic, her family and her lawyers for their courageous pursuit of justice in spite of great odds. To her mother's appeal for prayers, we offer those of our communities throughout the Philippines not only for the success of their legal endeavors but for her healing and consolation. We are designating the feast of the Holy Martyr St. Agatha on February 6 as a day of fasting and prayer for this intention and the intentions of all victims of sexual violence.

We appeal to the sense of fairness and justice of the US Embassy in the Philippines to facilitate the effective exercise of legal processes of the Philippine judicial system by surrendering the accused to be put on trial. We urge the Philippine Courts to render swift and autonomous judgment.

This case strengthens our conviction that the Visiting Forces Agreement should be abrogated by the Philippine Government. It not only occasions similar abuses and violation of human rights, but also casts a shadow on our sovereignty as a nation.

Manila
January 24, 2006

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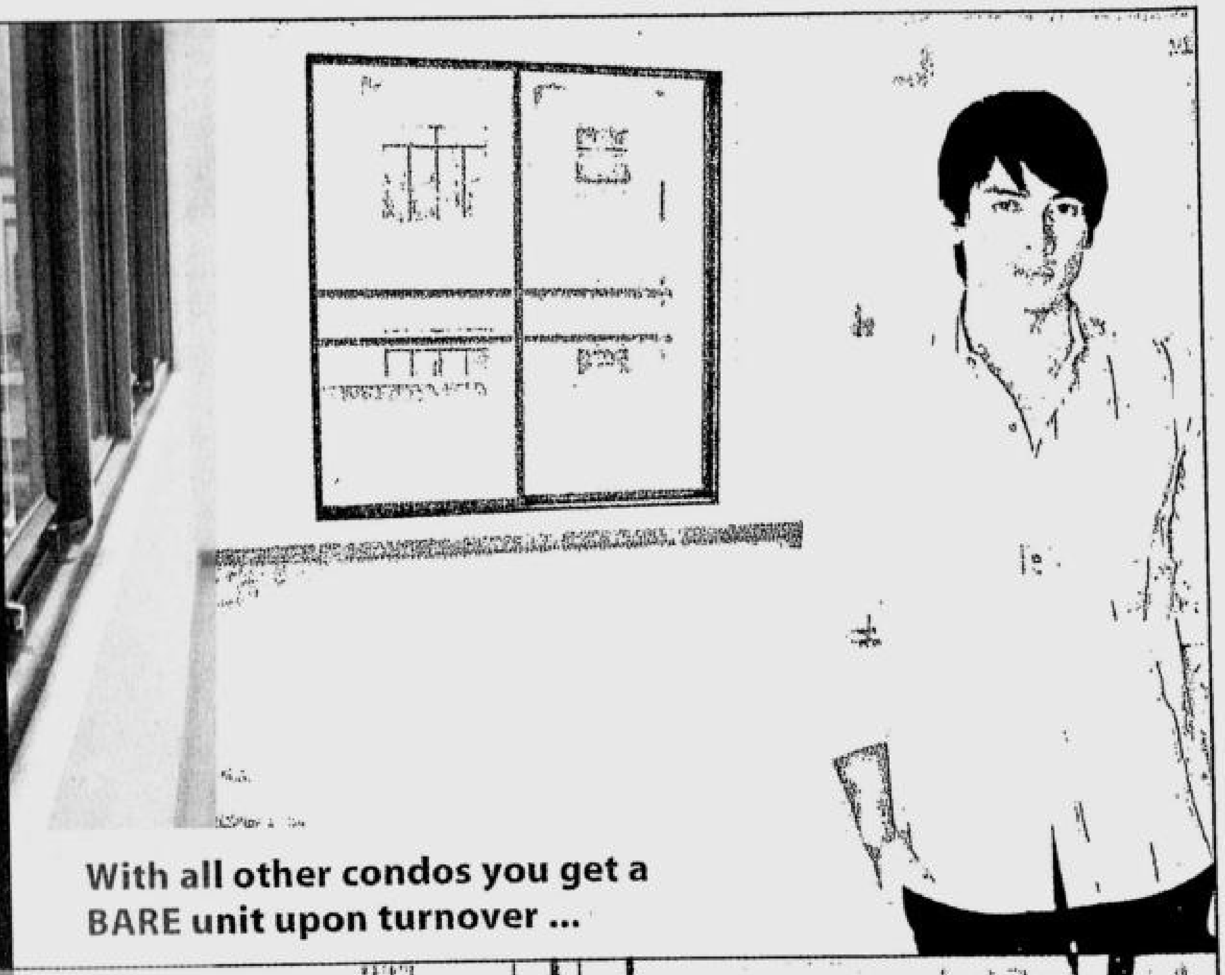

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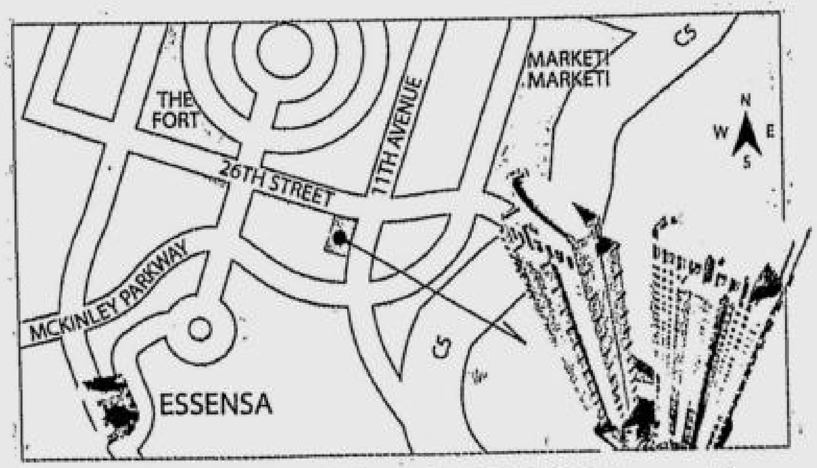
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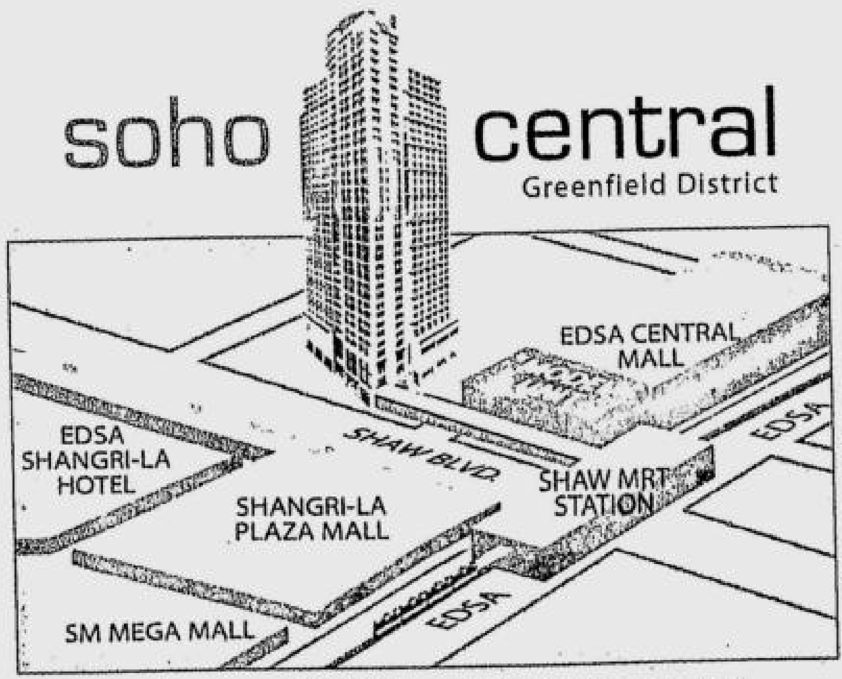
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GINEBRA's Chris Porter goes for a lay-up against Red bull's Enrico Villanueva in Game 2 of their semifinal series. RYAN LIM

EO places PSC under Department of Health

By Marc Anthony Reyes

MALACAÑANG HAS PLACED THE PHILIPPINE Sports Commission under the Department of Health in an Executive Order expected to complicate the process of development and training of Filipino athletes.

PSC chair Butch Ramirez yesterday confirmed the existence of EO 441 putting the DOH as the "oversight committee" on the health and fitness of the national athletes, currently under the care of the sports agency.

The EO came out last June 27 but was shelved so as not to disrupt the country's hosting last month of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games, where Team Philippines emerged overall champion for the first time since joining the biennial meet in 1977.

The PSC, with help from the First Gentleman's Foundation, funded the training and other needs of the RP athletes aside from financing the refurbishing of facilities used in the SEAG.

Sources said the EO may have violated Republic Act 6847 which created the PSC in 1990 as a government agency exclusively under the Office of the President.

Ramirez said the PSC board is concerned over the scope of the DOH's power over the PSC.

"It looks like the DOH as an oversight committee has overall management power and direct supervision over the PSC," Ramirez told the INQUIRER. "In that case we will be reporting to the DOH secretary regarding our program which concerns the athletes."

There should be no problem, according to Ramirez, if the DOH's extent of power is confined only to the physical condition of the athletes.

"But how would the DOH make decisions regarding sports policies?" he asked.

Red Bull ties Ginebra

By June Navarro

JAMES PENNY IS PROVING TO BE THE wise-money choice for Red Bull.

Penny seized the initiative when the game was on the line and carried the Bulls to an 86-83 win over the Barangay Ginebra Kings that leveled their San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference semifinal series last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Although nursing a fever, Penny buried a pair of clutch three-pointers that erased a three-point Ginebra lead and saved the day for the Bulls two games into the best-of-seven series.

"It's now a best-of-five and we did well on our last best-of-five," said Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao after the Bulls bounced back from a 105-100 overtime heartbreaker in Game 1.

"I guess the only difference between Game 1 and this game was we worked a little harder and got our running game back," he added.

GAMES TOMORROW
(Ynares Center)
4:40 p.m.—Air21 vs Purefoods
7:35 p.m.—Red Bull vs Barangay Ginebra

The Bulls are the No.1 fastbreaking team in the league but the Kings held them scoreless, 11-0, in transition the last time out. Last night the Bulls had 17 points off fastbreaks as against Ginebra's 13.

Penny, who was a last-minute replacement in the quarterfinals, actually clustered eight straight points in the last two minutes, including those back-to-back triples that shifted the momentum to the Bulls, 85-82, and had the Kings resorting to a prayer of a shot to send the game into overtime.

"I just had an open look and took it," said Penny, who finished with 25 points and 16 rebounds on top of three blocks, two steals and one assist. "I'm confident with those shots because I have a very good percentage on that area even in practice."

Despite the win, Guiao minced no words blasting the officiating.

The scores:

RED BULL 86—Penny 25, Tugade 13, BAgulo 12, Pennisi 9, Torion 8, Villanueva 6, Valenzuela 6, Cruz 5, Fonacier 2, Najorda 0, Bugia 0, Robinson 0.

GINEBRA 83—Porter 30, Caguloa 13, Santos 13, Helterbrand 11, Adducul 6, Menk 6, Holper 3, Salvacion 1, Macapagal 0, Dimaunahan 0.

Quarters: 11-22, 38-33, 60-59, 86-83

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Barrera ducks Pacquiao, battles Chavez instead

By Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor

MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA, THE FIRST MEXIcan boxing great Manny Pacquiao humbled in 2003, has abandoned plans of meeting the champion Filipino fighter in the near future.

With Pacquiao's masterful demolition last Saturday of Erik Morales still in everybody's lips, Barrera announced yesterday he had signed up to challenge International Boxing Federation (IBF) lightweight champion Jesus Chavez on March 25.

Barrera, the reigning World Boxing Council and IBF super featherweight, had delayed finalizing the fight with Chavez, saying he wanted to see first what happens to the rematch between his two big rivals.

Apparently, Barrera saw the writing on the wall, and realized that fighting Pacquiao in the immediate future constitutes a career suicide. The Filipino had stopped Barrera in the 11th round of a non-title clash three years ago.

Dubbed "The Ultimate Challenge" and presented by Golden Boy Promotions, the Barrera-Chavez showdown will take place at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas and will be televised by HBO.

As if to justify his decision, Barrera said the fight with Chavez gives him the chance of making history as the first ever Mexican-born fighter to win titles in four different divisions.

Trainer Freddie Roach, meanwhile, had refused to name a possible opponent for Pacquiao, although American Tim Austin, the former IBF bantam champ, had announced in media releases that he was willing to travel to the Philippines if that is what it takes to snag a fight with the Filipino ring icon.

Roach had hinted that the Filipino superstar may opt to fight next in the Philippines.

Ticker tape parade for Pacman

MANILA MAYOR LITO ATIENZA WILL LEAD THE hero's welcome for Manny "Pacman" Pacquiao entitled "Tagumpay ng Pinoy" when the Filipino boxing icon returns to Manila on Friday morning.

Pacquiao, an adopted son of Manila, is expected to arrive at Manila City Hall at 9 for a courtesy call on Mayor Atienza ,who will accompany him to Malacañang to pay a courtesy call on President Macapagal-Arroyo.

They will embark on a ticker tape parade that will start at City Hall; straight to Jones Bridge; right at Escolta to Plaza Sta. Cruz; straight to Dasmariñas; right at Quintin Paredes; right at Reigna Regente; left at Recto; right at Delpan; left at Zaragosa; right at R-10; right at Moriones; left at Juan Luna; right at Tayuman; right at Forbes; left at Laong Laan; right at Blumentritt; left at España; straight at Quezon Avenue; right at Scout Chuatoco; left going to Mo. Ignacia; right at Scout Esguerra; right at Eugenio Lopez; left at Timog; right at EDSA; right at Kamuning; left at Tomas Morato; right at E. Rodriguez; left at Araneta; right at Aurora Blvd. (R. Magsaysay Blvd.); left at Nagtahan; right at Zamora to Peñafrancia; left at Pedro Gil; right at Onyx to Dagonoy Market.

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PBL s'finals begin today

Young Harbour Centre tackles Rain or Shine

RAIN OR SHINE HOPES TO BANK ON ITS ARRAY OF SEASONED scorers when it tackles the young Harbour Centre crew today in the semifinal round of the PBL Heroes Cup.

GAMES TODAY
(San Andres Gym)
2 p.m.—Rain or Shine vs Harbour Centre
4 p.m.—Magnolia vs Granny Goose

Apart from the edge in experience, the Elasto Painters hold an outright one-game headstart in the best-of-five series that starts at 2 p.m. at the San Andres Gym.

Magnolia Ice Cream also totes a one-game cushion when it battles Granny Goose in their own semifinal match at 4 p.m.

Rain or Shine and Magnolia only need to win twice in the series to advance to the finals, the bonus given to the two teams with the best records at the end of the elimination round.

Harbour Centre and Granny Goose, however, must pull off three wins to have a shot at the championship.

Leading the Elasto Painters' offensive options is Jojo Tangkay, who averages a league-best 16.45 points.

Along with Tangkay, the leading candidate for the Most Valuable Player plum, Junjun Cabatu, Ronjay Enrile, Gilbert Malabanan and Jay-R Reyes also sizzled when the Painters closed the elimination round with five straight victories to claim the top spot.

But the momentum is also high for the Portmasters, who posted the longest winning run this conference with six consecutive wins.

"Game 1 of the semis is the most crucial so we have to beat them," said Harbour Centre coach Jorge Gallent. "If we lose, we have to beat them three in a row and that would be difficult."

The late inclusion of point guard LA Tenorio made the big difference for Harbour Centre, coupled with the improved performances of Fil-Am Rob Reyes and the hot shooting of Joseph Yeo.

While everything has been running smooth for the Painters and Portmasters, the Ice Cream Wizards could only wonder what hit them.

After an amazing 7-1 start, the Wizards unexpectedly ended their elimination-round campaign with three straight losses.

Main man Arwind Santos typified the Wizards' struggles, averaging only five points in his last three games.

But Tortillos coach Joe Lipa dismissed the Wizards' dipping performance.

"Magnolia is a very talented squad so we have to exert more effort and play real smart to beat them," said Lipa.

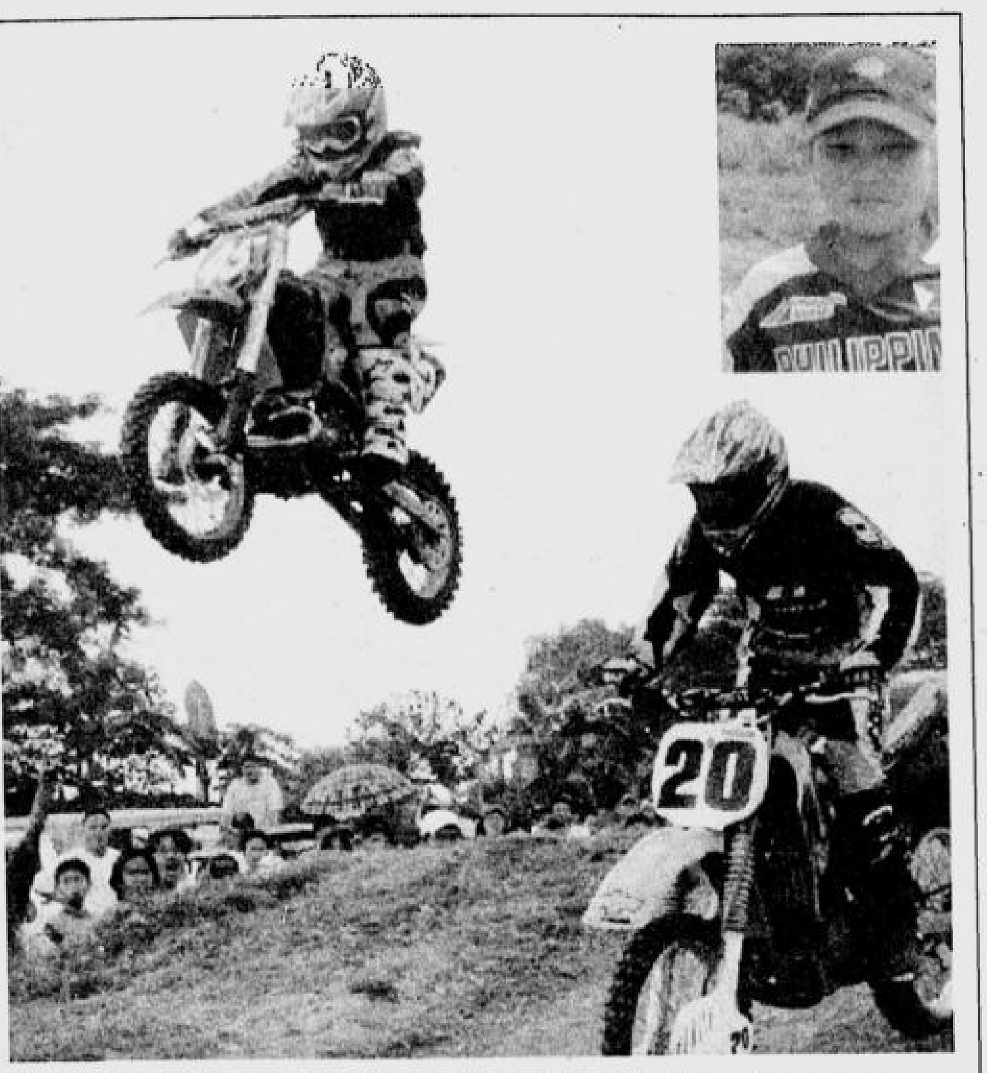
Both pairings figured in close fights in the elimination round. Rain or Shine nipped Harbour Centre in overtime, 74-70, while Magnolia slipped past Granny Goose, 69-65. *Jasmine W. Payo*

Toyota Otis tryout tomorrow

THE TOYOTA OTIS TEAM IN the Philippine Basketball League is holding an open tryout tomorrow at the Letran gym.

The tryout is set from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will be handled by coach Louie Alas.

The tryout is part of Toyota Otis' early preparation for the next PBL conference.



SUPERKID: Rafael "Raprap" Enriquez, the Superkid of Motocross, soars to overtake a competitor at a recent Motocross Competition in Pandi, Bulacan. The 9-year-old Grade 3 student of Lourdes School-QC won the 1st leg of the 2006 Super Juniors Motocross Series in Batangas City. He was also awarded 2005 NAMSSA National Champion (50cc), 2005 Ultimate Red Horse/GSM Speedfest Jr65 Rider of the Year and 2005 BMW-Authohaus Cup Jr65 Rider of the Year.

Mapua cagers trounce LPC

MAPUA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BEAT Las Piñas College, 72-63, to start its bid on a bright note yesterday in the National Capital Region (NCR) eliminations of the 60th National Students Basketball Championship at the PMI Gym in Escolta.

The Cardinals led 36-31 at the half and never looked back from.

Las Piñas tried to bounce back behind Mark Constantino who pulled the count to 45-47 midway the final half.

But Cardinals coach Horacio Lim told his boys to step up on defense and the ploy proved effective as Mapua pulled away anew, 63-53, with five minutes to go.

Jofer Gonzales topped Mapua with 18 points while Gilbert Migraso added 17. Raymond Tiongco and Jerby del Rosario added nine and seven points, respectively.

Constantino paced Las Piñas College with 17 points while Joseph Emano contributed 13.

Sixteen college teams and 16 high school teams are participating in this annual tournament organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines. The other matches are being played at presstime.

The top three college teams and the top three high school teams after the elimination round will advance to the 60th National Students Basketball Championship also known as the National Inter-Secondary and National Inter-Collegiate Championship which will be held in Bacolod City from Feb. 26 to March 4.

Host Bacolod under the supervision of BAP Regional Director Anthony Agustin will inform BAP president Joey Lina on the other venues aside from the newly renovated West Negros College Stadium which will be the main venue of the event.

For details, contact NSBC commissioner Rolly Tumapat at 0915-9991590.

La Salle bets win

LA SALLE FELL A DIVISION TITLE SHORT OF its sweep bid as Marcel Puyat powered Ateneo to the boys grade school crown at the close Tuesday of the sixth Samsung Interscholastic golf championships at the Tagaytay Highlands and Midlands courses.

Miko Yee and his Greenhills high school team highlighted the La Salle romp by keeping the overall team and individual titles that went with the Greenies' capture of the boys college and the combined college-high school competitions for girls.

Yee scored 54 points for the second straight day, Marco Olives had 51 and Alan Guy chipped in 41 as LSGH posted a 146 and a three-day tally of 423 for the highest total among the 29 teams entered in the tourney. Carlos Fonacier and Marvin Mendoza complete the team.

Oliver Gan, Justin Limjap, Charles Hong, Vruno Villanueva and Marlo Capinianes won the boys college plum while Geleen Handog, Kim Hong and Lileth de Villa captured combined high school-college girls play for La Salle-Taft.

Ateneo denied La Salle of another sweep with Puyat leading his team to an eight-point win in the event staged by Samsung Electronics Philippines Inc. and co-sponsored by Tokyo Tokyo, KZG, Microtel, Srixon, Pacsports, Philippine Airlines as the official carrier, Sunbolt, Rudy Project, C-Lium Fiber and Sports Plus. Media partners are Wave 89.1, Jam 88.3 , 89.9, 99.5 RT, 103.5 K-Lite and Killer Bee.

Joining Puyat in the victory over La Salle Greenhills were Bino dela Paz, Rafael Vera Cruz, Niko Evangelista and RJ Banzon.

Poveda held off a big rally by the Masters Academy to clinch the girls grade school award. Paulina Sotto scored 25 and Andie Unson 20 for a 208 total, three more than Master's which got 25 from Christina Potenciano and 23 from Andrea Legaspi.

Samsung awarded trophies to the team and individual champions and also raffled off appliances, mp3 and cell phones.

Yee beat Miko Alejandro for the overall individual title after Alejandro only scored 49 on the last day.

The other individual champions were Oliver Gan, who beat Justin Limjap in boys college, Beverly Mendoza, who prevailed over Cyna Rodriguez for the college-high school girls, Sotto, who bested Potenciano, and Puyat, who beat Bino dela Paz in the elementary division and JR Gonzales and Princess Superal in the special division.

Coach E boasts of top mentors

THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL, WHICH guarantees quality basketball instruction from top players like Eric Altamirano, Ronnie Magsanoc, Benjie Paras and Joey Guanio, started yesterday in two venues.

Aside from the four members of the UP Maroons team that won the UAAP title in 1986, the school also features mentors Xavy Nunag and Jigs Mendoza.

Altamirano, who founded the school in 2004, promises personalized and scientific basketball training in the school backed by Burlington, Accel, Spalding, Brothers Burger, Proline, Viva Mineral Water and Powerade.

Enrollment is welcome at 631-1195 from Monday to Fridays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (look for Mylene) and 0921-17562639. E-mailed reservations at iba_phil@yahoo.com should include the child's name and contact number.

RACING

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Princess Indy (1), Magiliw (2), Epic Energy (4), Astronaut (3)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Habagat (2), Dancing Spree (8), JJ's Friend (7), Gmaby's Attack (1)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)— Money Man (4), Real Black (1), Ocean Deep (6), Key Element (9), Full of Fury (7)
Race 4—(Penta/Tri)—Raven (5), Aim and Fire (4), Mountain Eagle (8), Friendly Venture (7), Makati Haven (3)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Bold Lucky (3), Selectee (2), Golden Issue (4), En Carta (1)
Race 6—(Penta/Tri)— Modern Classic (8), Miss Bobon (5), Aminin (9), Silver Cho Cho (1), Mano Po (7)
Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Ikaw Lamang (5), Mini Skirt (1), Good Day (6), Chances Are (4)
Race 8—(Penta/Tri)—Real Spicy/High Octane (6), Wear The Fox Hat (4), Earl Gray (1), Teetotal (3), Softas (5)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Kaiphia (9), Zaniga (4), Boxster (8), Better Strike (10), Top Of D' Line (2), Shaolin (6)

Only 20 NSAs submit report to POC

THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC Committee has given national sports associations until the end of the month to submit their assessment or else lose their chance of getting picked as one of the priority sports.

COJUANGCO

POC president Peping Cojuangco yesterday said only 20 NSAs were able to submit their reports during the POC general assembly. The NSAs' reports, he added, would be the basis of he final assessment by the POC executive board.

Cojuangco said the POC executive board will then "sit down with the Philippine Sports Commission" before coming out with the list of priority sports that will be assured of funding from the government.

The POC chief said the list doesn't have to be 10, "it could be eight or even more than 10 for as long as these NSAs can establish that their athletes have the potential to win gold medals in the Olympics."

The frenzy came about when President Macapagal-Arroyo issued an order determining 10 sports to be given funding by the government and the private sector based on their chances of winning the Philippines' first Olympic gold in Beijing in 2008.

Cojuangco said the list should be finalized by the end of February when the training program for the Doha Asian Games is in place.

"Like before the Athens Olympics was held, who has ever heard of archery, of their programs?" said Cojuangco. "There must be a clear proof of the athletes' potentials." *Marc Anthony Reyes*

SPORTSWATCH

Red Horse-PCSO Drag Racing

TWO OF THE BEST DRAG RACING TEAMS—BLANCHE RACING AND GROUP N-Matonetics Racing—gear up for a big showdown when the 2005 Red Horse-PCSO National Drag Racing Championship Series returns Saturday at the BRC Drag Strip in Rosario, Batangas. Group N-Matonetics's Sonny de Torres is eyeing to a third straight win in the Quick 8 category against Blanche Racing's Walter Pazon and Sheldon Chua. The event is sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Phils. and sponsored by Red Horse, PCSO, Petron, Sparco and supported by Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Denso Spark Plugs, Casino Filipino, GV 99.9 FM and DaBest98.5 FM.

Jackpot prize awaits Roligon winners

A JACKPOT PRIZE OF P4 MILLION PLUS A BRAND NEW TOYOTA INNOVA AWAIT the champions in the 16th Anniversary 6-cock derby of Roligon Mega Cockpit on Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4, 7 and 9. "Cockers and breeders should take note that the prize money is the same as that of an international derby," said host Rolly Ligon. "The only difference is that we're giving away a Toyota Innova for the fastest win champion." Entry fee is P11,000. The first round of eliminations (2-cock) will start at 10 a.m. Tuesday due to the big number of first-day combatants which rose to 150 yesterday. Last year, Wewe Burgos of Batangas, Teddy Macadagdag of Cavite and Jeric Junio of Bulacan, ruled the 384-entry Roligon Anniversary Derby. Call 851-2275, 833-1638 and 852-9812.

Las Piñas derby features 94 fights

NINETY-FOUR FIGHTS WILL SPICE UP A SPECIAL 3-COCK DERBY AT THE FULly air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum. Coliseum manager Alex Tobias, derby host, said that entries came from as far as Bataan, Pampanga, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal and Metro Manila. Derby starts 6 p.m. Aside from the cash prize of P300,000 on the line, an additional bonus of P1,000 per win will be given away. Entry fee is P5,500. Submission of entries is from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call 873-1040 and 874-3910.

Global derby finals today at Big Dome

THE 2006 CYBERFRIENDS GLOBAL DERBY RESUMES TODAY AT THE ARANETA Coliseum starting at 4 p.m. Sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds, tonight's 3-cock finals feature 33 undefeated entries and 8 bets with 1-win and 1-draw apiece. Twenty entries have 1 point each. The Cyberfriends is a group of Pinoy *sabungeros* and foreign pitfighters who have been acquainted through www.sabong.net.ph. Raul Ebreo is the current Cyberfriends president.

Callaway Demo Tour today

CALLAWAY GOLF WILL HOLD THE SECOND PART OF ITS DEMO TOUR FOR new products today and tomorrow at the Las Piñas driving range. The hitting sessions will be conducted from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Golfers will be given the chance to hit Callaway's clubs from the FT3, ERC Hot, X-18, BB 454 drivers: Fusion Titanium, X-Tour Forged and X-18 iron and BB Titanium and FT3 fairway woods. The Demo Tour is organized by Callaway's local distributor, Planet Sports.

For lying, El Terrible terribly mauled (Or why Erik Morales was kayoed)

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES—WHEN MANNY PACQUIAO and trainer Freddie Roach did a duet in Las Vegas last week to admit mistakes, one grizzled boxing expert listened in amusement and great concern.

That listener was Larry Merchant, the familiar gray-haired figure left with the task of quietly debating with fighters after a big boxing bout.

On Saturday night, Merchant was there again beside Pacquiao, the winner whom he called a combination of Muhammad Ali, Bruce Lee and Elvis Presley.

This time, the task of talking to the winner came quite easy.

While other experts like Al Bernstein and Ring Magazine had predicted a Morales win, Merchant refused to be swayed.

***

Merchant told this reporter at the Margaux media assembly area of the Wynn Las Vegas on the eve of The Battle he had a hunch it would be Pacquiao.

Nothing clear and definite, just a gut feel, Merchant clarified.

But why such a hunch?

"Because Pacquiao could really improve on his mistakes," Merchant said.

It would be noted that among the first things Pacquiao did upon touching base in Las Vegas for his rematch with Morales was hold a mini presscon.

There, he explained how they had undermined and taken Morales lightly before the first encounter at MGM Grand.

***

Freddie Roach grabbed the mike and took the blame. He explained he had sincerely thought Pacquiao would have an easy outing against Morales last March because El Terrible had lost to Marco Antonio Barrera, whom Pacman had knocked out in Texas.

Silly, but it did not turn out to be that simple.

Roach and Pacquiao, saying they had made all necessary adjustments, promised a complete turnaround in the rematch.

Now, forget what they say that it could be the case of too many blows in too many fights in too many rings for Morales.

Forget how Morales had junked his father as trainer. Forget reports that he was coming in from an extended honeymoon with a new, younger wife and was still 145 pounds a couple of week before The Battle.

Forget whispered claims Morales took the brutal Lasix reducing pill in order to drastically shed excess poundage.

***

Instead, Morales should be made to explain why he mouthed falsehood in the fight press conference.

Morales definitely was not being honest to himself when he announced that he did not remember being shaken by a single Pacquiao punch in their first meeting.

If there was one fighter who had really hurt him, Morales would say, it was Junior Jones, two-time conqueror of Barrera, Morales' nemesis.

He was not hurt by Pacquiao a single moment in their first battle?

If Morales did not remember being shaken or hurt, while his legs behaved like soggy noodles in the 12th round of his first encounter against Pacquiao, truth came knocking in the form of a sorry stoppage on Saturday.

***

So experts claimed it was never possible for Pacquiao-Morales 11 to have turned into a continuation of the first encounter between the two great pugilists.

Well, when the first bell sounded for the rematch last Saturday, it was no longer for the first round but, in reality, for Round 13 of the Pacman-El Terrible rivalry.

Morales visibly brought into the second encounter memories of the near knockout suffered against Pacquiao in the first fight.

Pacquiao capitalized on what he had learned and discovered in the first fight.

He worked hard, very hard to cure his mistakes.

Pacquiao did not peddle falsehood.

Morales did. He should be able to come back only if he starts being unfair to himself.

Super Bowl: Everybody wants to be the underdog

TACOMA, WASHINGTON—SUPER BOWL XL can't have two underdogs can it?

The Pittsburgh Steelers were more than ready to point out to reporters after defeating the Denver Broncos in the AFC Championship Game that they were the team everyone expected to lose. If not to the Broncos on Sunday, then to the Indianapolis Colts in the divisional playoff. Or the Cincinnati Bengals in the wild-card game.

Using the old disrespected ploy for all it was worth, sixth-seeded Pittsburgh "shocked the world"—according to Steelers receiver Hines Ward—by impressively winning three road games against the conference's No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 seeded teams.

It's the first time a sixth-seed made the Super Bowl and only the second time a team has won three road games to make it. The 1985 New England Patriots were the others to do it.

"No one believed in us but us," Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger said.

That's starting to change. Many think Pittsburgh will defeat the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl in Detroit on Feb. 5. Oddsmakers installed them as 3 1/2-point favorites.

Running back Jerome Bettis said the Steelers will be able to handle the new role.

"I think we've learned from the mistakes of the past and we haven't been overconfident and taking anybody for granted," Bettis said. "I think that's because of the position we were in, working our way up from the bottom."

Ward said being an underdog actually made it easier for the Steelers in their run because the expectations were lower. That was a big change from the previous season when the Steelers went 15-1, earned home-field advantage in the playoffs but lost in the title game to the defending Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, 41-27.

"This year there were no expectations," Ward said. "We were the sixth seed. Nobody expected much out of us. There was more pressure on (our opponents) than us. We went out and played ball and everything worked out the way it's supposed to."

Ward's take is somewhat misleading. The Steelers did have to beat the Detroit Lions in the regular season finale just to reach the playoffs, but they weren't a fluky wild-card team destined to flameout in the first round. An 11-5 record, in most seasons, easily qualifies a team for the postseason.

Where Pittsburgh might have been overlooked was in media coverage. The Patriots, Colts, Broncos and even the improved Bengals drew attention and were the popular choices to represent the AFC in the Super Bowl.

The Steelers' running game and defense, however, were made for the playoffs, and it's not a big leap to say the Steelers were better than the teams that won division titles.

Four of the Steelers' losses were to playoff teams. *New York Times News Service*

Iverson hauls Sixers past distracted Kings

PHILADELPHIA—ALLEN IVERSON SCORED 41 points and Chris Webber had 17 points and 13 rebounds, leading the Philadelphia 76ers over the undermanned Sacramento Kings 109-103 in the NBA on Tuesday.

The Kings were without Peja Stojakovic because he stayed back at the hotel after the team reportedly agreed to send him to Indiana for Ron Artest earlier in the day. However, the trade fell through, though Artest left open the possibility that something could still happen.

"As far as distractions go, not having Peja was the biggest thing," Mike Bibby said. "We still don't know what's going on."

Bibby had a career-high 44 points and Kevin Martin added 20 as the Kings lost their third straight game. Sacramento has won at least 55 games in four straight seasons, but is last in the Pacific Division.

The Sixers have won three in a row, improving to 21-20 at the halfway point of the season. Philadelphia, which came in allowing the third-most points in the NBA, reverted back to its usual form on defense after consecutive solid efforts.

The Sixers held Memphis and Minnesota to under 90 points each, but allowed the Kings to shoot 47.6 percent.

"We've gotten a little bit better on the defensive end," coach Maurice Cheeks said. "Tonight wasn't one of our best defensive efforts, but if we're going to make a move, we'll have to do it on the defensive end."

In Cleveland, LeBron James had 23 points, eight assists and seven rebounds as the Cavaliers rolled past the Indiana Pacers, 96-66, which may be on the verge of trading Ron Artest.

James scored 12 points in the third quarter—one fewer than the Pacers—and the Cavaliers outscored Indiana 27-13.

In Orlando, Florida, Hedo Turkoglu scored 30 points and the Magic limited the Phoenix Suns to just one basket in final 4:48 for a 111-102 win.

Turkoglu hit an 18-foot jumper with 6:12 left in the game to break at 95-all tie and had eight more points down the stretch to help Orlando gain control of a see-saw game.

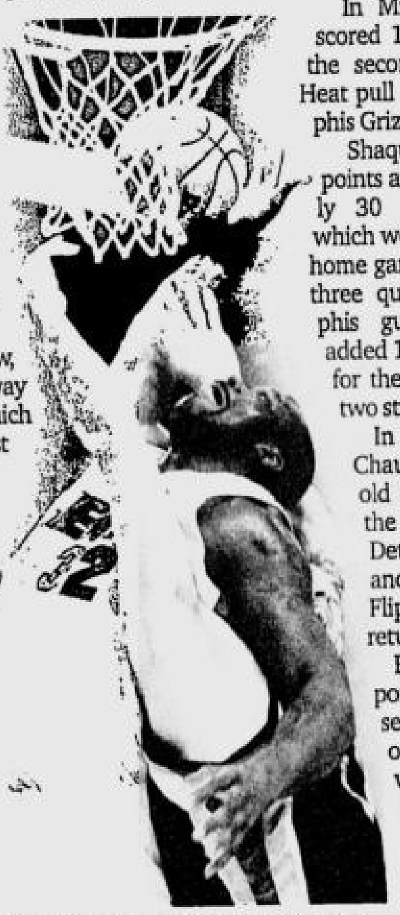
In Miami, Dwyane Wade scored 18 of his 25 points in the second half, helping the Heat pull away from the Memphis Grizzlies, 94-82.

Shaquille O'Neal had 20 points and 15 rebounds in only 30 minutes for Miami, which won its 51st consecutive home game when leading after three quarters. Former Memphis guard Jason Williams added 14 points and six assists for the Heat, who have won two straight.

In Minneapolis, Chauncey Billups beat his old team by five points in the third quarter, leading Detroit to a 107-83 win and giving Pistons coach Flip Saunders a satisfying return to Minnesota.

Billups finished with 27 points, eight assists and seven rebounds after outscoring the Timberwolves 18-13 by himself in the third.

In San Antonio, Beno Udrih had season highs of 17 points and eight assists, and Tim Duncan had 14 points and nine rebounds to lead the Spurs over injury-plagued Charlotte Bobcats, 104-76. *AP*



PAU GASOL (16) of the Memphis Grizzlies gets tangled up with Shaquille O'Neal (32) of the Miami Heat in a rebound play. AFP

NBA on Solar: 10 a.m.—Minnesota vs Memphis (replay at 9 p.m.)

Hingis' run finally hits brick wall

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—Martina Hingis found out Wednesday that she can still slug it out with the best but has a ways to go to get back to the top.

Second-seeded Kim Clijsters, overcoming a rash of mistakes, ended Hingis' dramatic comeback run at the Australian Open, winning, 6-3, 2-6, 6-4, to reach the semifinals and take over the No. 1 ranking.

"It's been a long time since I played her," Clijsters said after Hingis, a three-time champion here, exited Rod Laver Arena to a loud ovation. "She's improved a lot since she was at her best."

But that was when the power surge in women's tennis was just picking up momentum. While Hingis showed that she wasn't overmatched from the baseline, her weak serve let her down, setting up easy Clijsters winners.

Asked if she learned anything, Hingis said: "Speed is important."

Despite the loss, she said she was satisfied with her first Grand Slam event in three years.

"I think I can be proud of myself," Hingis said. "You just can't think you're going to go out there and win everything. Losing to Kim today still gives me so much to look forward to. I just have to work harder. I have to start believing."

The victory guaranteed that reigning US Open champion Clijsters will take over the top ranking from Lindsay Davenport, who lost in the quarterfinals.

"After the year I had last year, this is the cherry on the cake," she said. "It was never a goal. Keep working hard and good things happen."

She next plays No. 3 Amelie Mauresmo, who reeled off the last nine straight games in a 6-3, 6-0 quarterfinal win over No. 7 Patty Schnyder of Switzerland.

On the men's side, No. 21 Nicolas Kiefer of Germany survived a nearly five-hour match—and a 96-minute final set—to beat No. 25 Sebastien Grosjean of France, 6-3, 0-6, 6-4, 6-7 (1), 8-6, to advance to the semifinals.

Kiefer will play the winner of the late match between top-ranked Roger Federer and No. 5 Nikolay Davydenko.

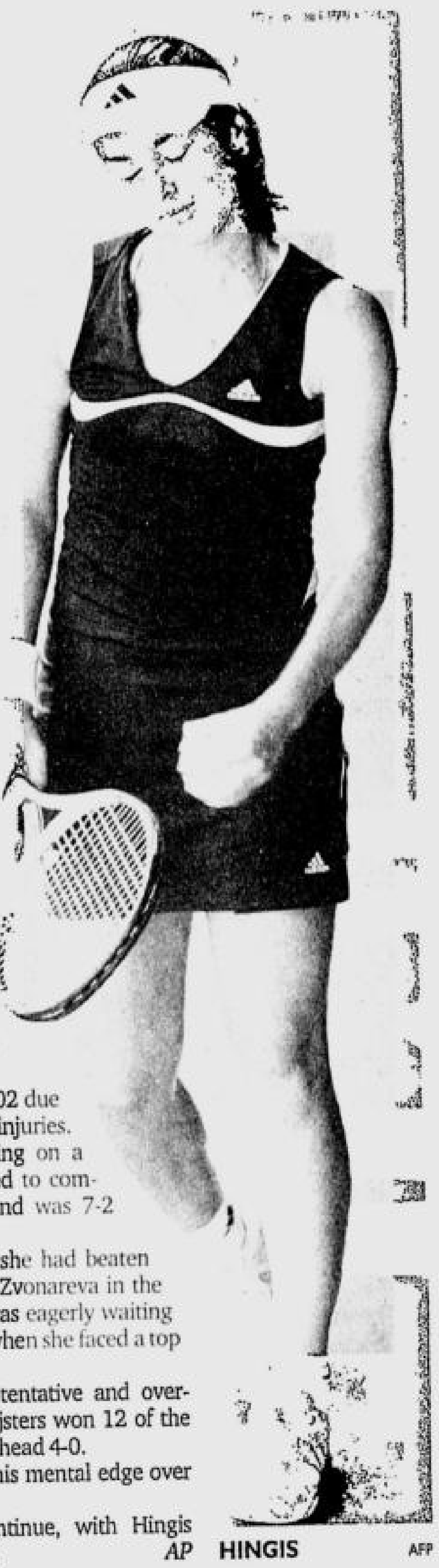
Hingis quit the tour in 2002 due to persistent foot and heel injuries. Ranked No. 349 and playing on a wild-card entry, she returned to competitive tennis on Jan. 2 and was 7-2 coming into the match.

But the best player that she had beaten here was 30th-seeded Vera Zvonareva in the first round, and everyone was eagerly waiting to see what would happen when she faced a top player like Clijsters.

Hingis looked nervous, tentative and overmatched at the start, as Clijsters won 12 of the first 16 points and jumped ahead 4-0.

"I always used to have this mental edge over other players," she said.

The comeback will continue, with Hingis heading next to Tokyo next. *AP*



HINGIS AFP

Greatness awaits Pacquiao

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY OUR GRIZZLED pundits that I love to be with mostly all these years (Rene Jose of RMN 558 is one of them of course), have started comparing Manny Pacquiao with Flash Elorde. Pancho Villa, too.

I have seen glimpses of Elorde, the poor, shoeshine kid from Bogo, Cebu, who became world junior champion (130 lb) in 1960. Alas, not Villa, the flyweight dreamer from Iloilo, who became world flyweight champion (112 lb) long before World War II broke out.

The few film clips I saw about Elorde, umm, he was good.

The loads of stories I heard about Villa, umm, he was good, too.

Elorde reigned for nearly a decade as the world junior lightweight champion—from 1960 to 1967. That's not to be sneezed at. Boxing is so cruel a sport that for one to be The Top, the Numero Uno, that long is something you salute till eternity.

Villa took America by storm near the era of the so-called Roaring Twenties. His name was Francisco Guilledo, a spunky kid out of Iloilo, who was rechristened Pancho Villa because of his big punch, big heart and big dreams.

Villa became America's darling because of his speed and power. He was on his way to full stardom when tragedy struck him in the so-called land of milk and honey: he died after fighting a guy named Jimmy McLarnin in California.

No, not because he got knocked out by McLarnin.

No, not because he was beaten black and blue by McLarnin in their 10-round fight that saw Villa lose on points in a non-title, overweight bout. Villa was the world champion then in the 112-lb division. Unfortunately, due to loose rules or something, he was ordered to fight an overweight McLarnin, who climbed the ring a bloated 120 lb. According to my buddy Ed Picson of the Bulletin and dzSR, McLarnin would proceed to become the world welterweight (147 lbs) champion.

Tragically, Villa died just days after that loss to McLarnin because of blood poisoning due to an infection. An abscessed tooth prior to the fight was the culprit. Villa ignored doctor's advice not to fight McLarnin. That cost him his life. With Villa's death, his throne was declared vacant.

While Elorde was composed, reserved and quiet as a cemetery, Villa was flamboyant, gaudy and loud as a rock concert.

Pacquiao would as much resemble Villa, both in fighting style and lifestyle.

Villa, when he came home from a big fight in America, would demand a ticker tape parade around Manila on board the most expensive, flashy car—dressed gaudily like a certified ramp model superstar.

Didn't Pacquiao buy a Porsche Cayenne, definitely a ride fit only for the wealthy, days before he fought Erik Morales?

If that's not being flamboyant enough, what is?

But then, give it to Pacquiao. Every hero, celebrity, deserves more than the ordinary. Extraordinariness is a first cousin of success.

Now as to who is better, if not the best, among the three atop the ring—punching power and all—I say it's Pacquiao.

As I keep saying here, no boxer will remain standing once he gets hit by a Pacquiao punch. The good thing about Pacquiao is, whether it's his left or his right connecting, it can send anyone to dreamland. He's that strong in both hands and I've never seen any boxer in his class, Filipino or not, that can match his punching power. Not Elorde. Not Villa.

OK, some say Elorde was a classic and Villa was complete.

In classic, we mean Elorde fights almost methodically, if not scientifically, all the time. No brawl, just mostly boxing.

In complete, we mean Villa fights almost scientifically, if not methodically, all the time. All brawl, all boxing.

In the case of Pacquiao, he has yet to have the classic trait of Elorde—but he is almost there as seen in his classic 10-round destruction of Erik Morales on Jan. 22 in Las Vegas. He was mostly Mr. Brawl, until Freddie Roach came along and taught him the rudiments of pure, unadulterated boxing tinged with body banging and crisp head-hunting. That was extremely evident in Pacquiao's last fight seen all over the world via pay per view.

Definitely, though, the three are now our greatest boxers ever. But Pacquiao is set to become the greatest ever of the three. At 27, Pacquiao is still due for more big wins that can make him truly our finest boxer of all time.

Again, as I always love to say here, discipline would be the key. That's the aspect in Pacquiao's arsenal that I'm worried most as he is known to have a weakness for BBC—B as in beer, B as in billiards and C as in cockfights.

Not bad for Pacquiao to have his BBC. Let Pacquiao enjoy all three. But if he also intends to enjoy his fame and wealth—and surely he'll gain more of those—he must handle his BBC with moderation.

Elorde had discipline and stayed 7 years at the top.

Villa had no discipline, was stubborn, and paid dearly for it.

Pacquiao should learn from the two.

***

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

UAAP: Still no decision on La Salle controversy

By Jasmine W. Payo

LA SALLE'S QUERY ON THE LEGALITIES OF its planned pullout from next season's basketball competition remains unanswered as the UAAP board decided yesterday to tackle the case in next month's meeting.

UAAP representatives remain tight-lipped on the eligibility case involving two Archers, but issued a statement yesterday noting that "the board prefers not to make any statement on the La Salle players' issue to avoid meddling with the fact-finding body's task."

In the same statement, Dr. Ricardo Matibag, league secretary-treasurer and member of the investigating panel, assured that any decision or recommendation on the case will be announced, at the very most, on the last week of February.

Absent from yesterday's board meeting was league president Fr. Max Rendon, who was out of town.

The board members only discussed the eligibility of athletes in the second-semester sports and other league rules.

La Salle is mulling over the possibility of filing a leave of absence from the cage tournament after uncovering two ineligible players in its roster last October. But the school only wants to pull out of basketball competitions.

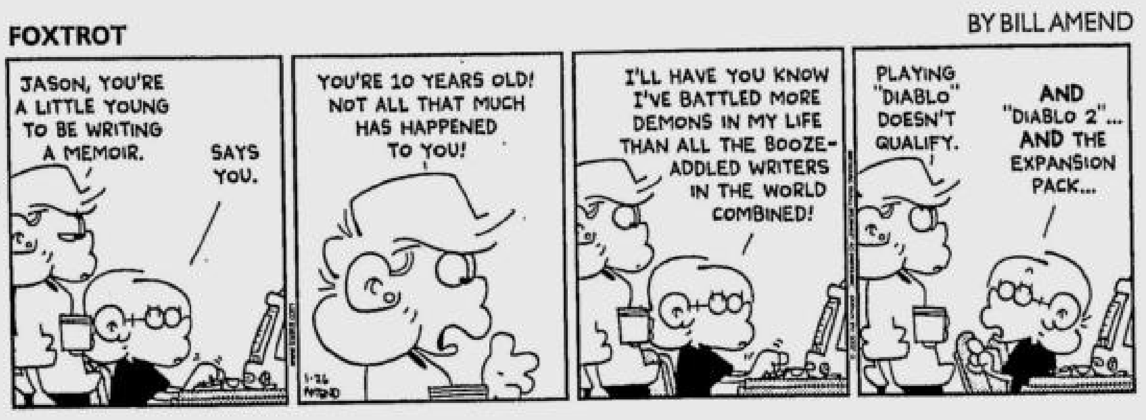
Archers Mark Benitez and Tim Gatchalian submitted fake certificates of their Philippine Educational Placement Test, an exam taken in lieu of a high school diploma, to gain entry in college.

The university voluntarily offered to return its 2004 championship trophy.

REGATTA CHAMPS: The Manila Dragons Dragonboat Rowing Team won three awards in the recently concluded 2006 Jam [illegible] FM Dragonboat Regatta 3rd Leg in cooperation with the Philippine Dragon Boat [illegible] at the Manila Bay. The Manila Dragons fielded two strong men's teams which saw action [illegible] round of the 500-meter event. Team A paddled with veteran rowers and Team B, [illegible] in the race, consisted of new members and first-time paddlers. The women's crew [illegible] runner-up trophy in the 250-m race with a time of 1:19.27. Team's A and B, [illegible], got the 2nd and 3rd runner-up trophies. Team captains and seasoned rowers Edward Vasquez, Mylene Buenafe and Roli Inocencio led the Manila Dragons. Joining the team in photo are Iris Ocba, the team's executive secretary (extreme left, standing) and team manager Raul Bumanglag (extreme right, standing).

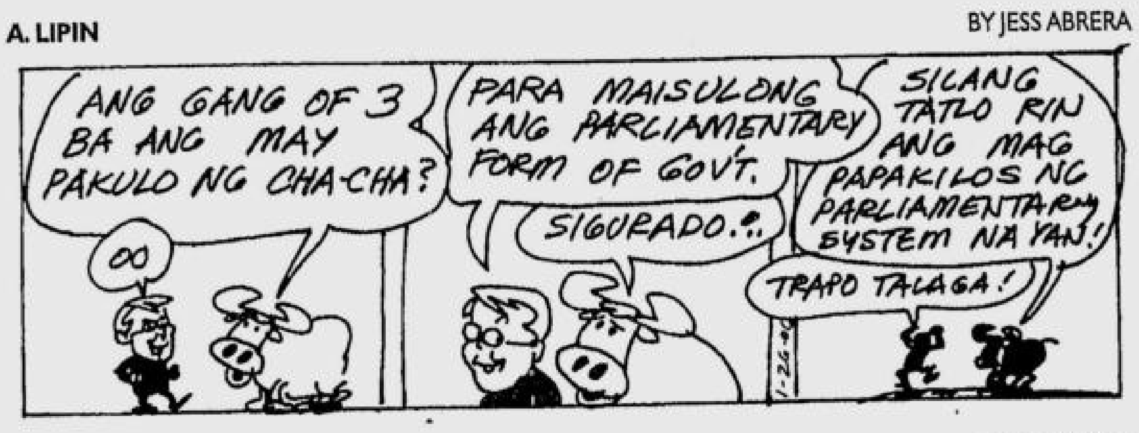
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


JASON, YOU'RE A LITTLE YOUNG TO BE WRITING A MEMOIR.
SAYS YOU.
YOU'RE 10 YEARS OLD! NOT ALL THAT MUCH HAS HAPPENED TO YOU!
I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW I'VE BATTLED MORE DEMONS IN MY LIFE THAN ALL THE BOOZE-ADDLED WRITERS IN THE WORLD COMBINED!
PLAYING "DIABLO" DOESN'T QUALIFY.
AND "DIABLO 2"... AND THE EXPANSION PACK...
1-26

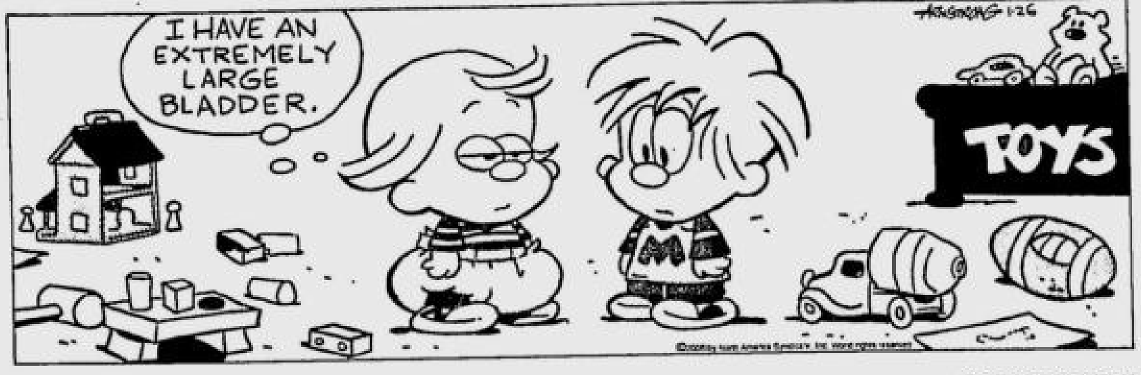
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANG GANG OF 3 BA ANG MAY PAKULO NG CHA-CHA?
OO
PARA MAISULONG ANG PARLIAMENTARY FORM OF GOV'T.
SIGURADO.
SILANG TATLO RIN ANG MAG PAPAKILOS NG PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM NA YAN!
TRAPO TALAGA!
1-26

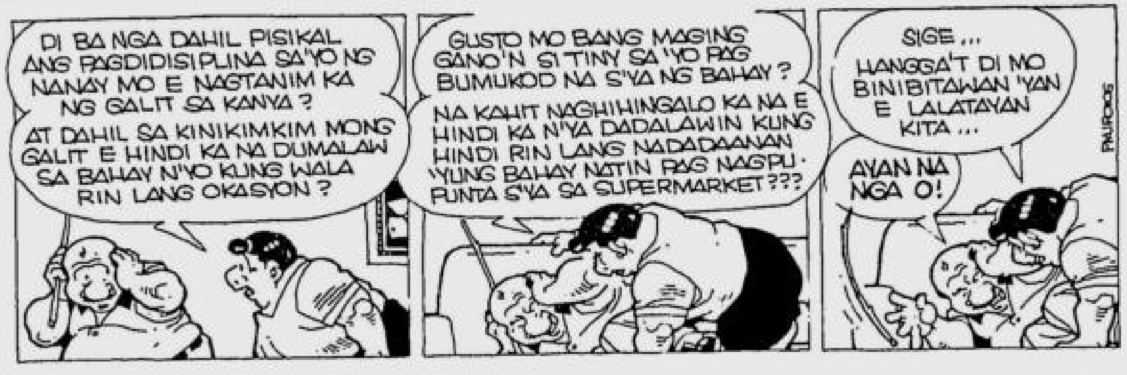
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I HAVE AN EXTREMELY LARGE BLADDER.
TOYS
ARMSTRONG 1-26

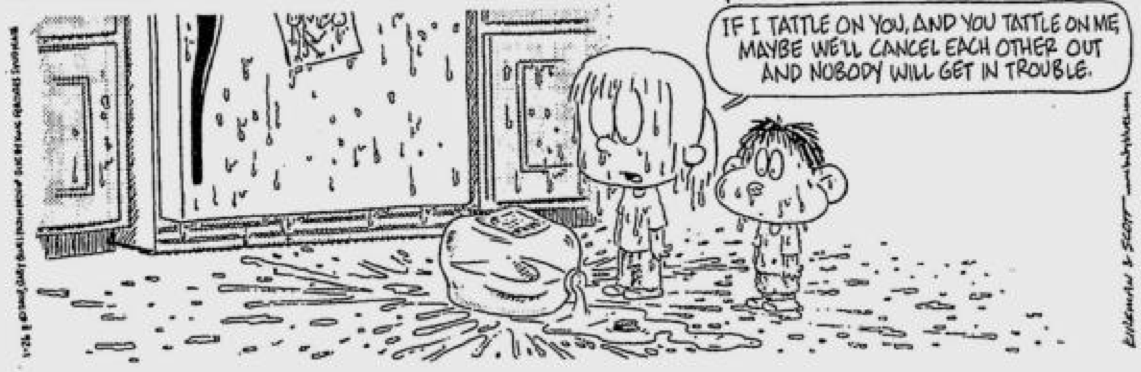
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


DI BA NGA DAHIL PISIKAL ANG PAGDIDISIPLINA SA'YO NG NANAY MO E NAGTANIM KA NG GALIT SA KANYA?
AT DAHIL SA KINIKIMKIM MONG GALIT E HINDI KA NA DUMALAW SA BAHAY N'YO KUNG WALA RIN LANG OKASYON?
GUSTO MO BANG MAGING GANO'N SI TINY SA 'YO PAG BUMUKOD NA S'YA NG BAHAY?
NA KAHIT NAGHIHINGALO KA NA E HINDI KA N'YA DADALAWIN KUNG HINDI RIN LANG NADADAANAN 'YUNG BAHAY NATIN PAG NAGPUPUNTA S'YA SA SUPERMARKET???
SIGE... HANGGA'T DI MO BINIBITAWAN 'YAN E LALATAYAN KITA...
AYAN NA NGA O!
PMJR

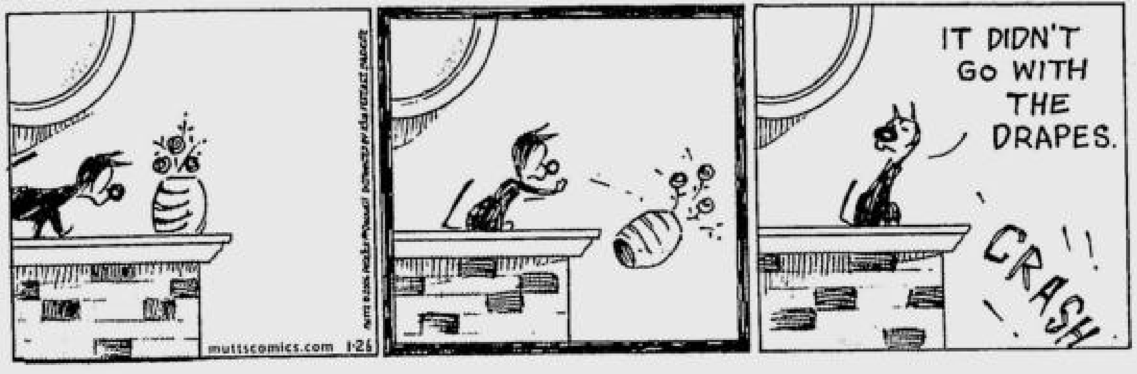
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


IF I TATTLE ON YOU, AND YOU TATTLE ON ME, MAYBE WE'LL CANCEL EACH OTHER OUT AND NOBODY WILL GET IN TROUBLE.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

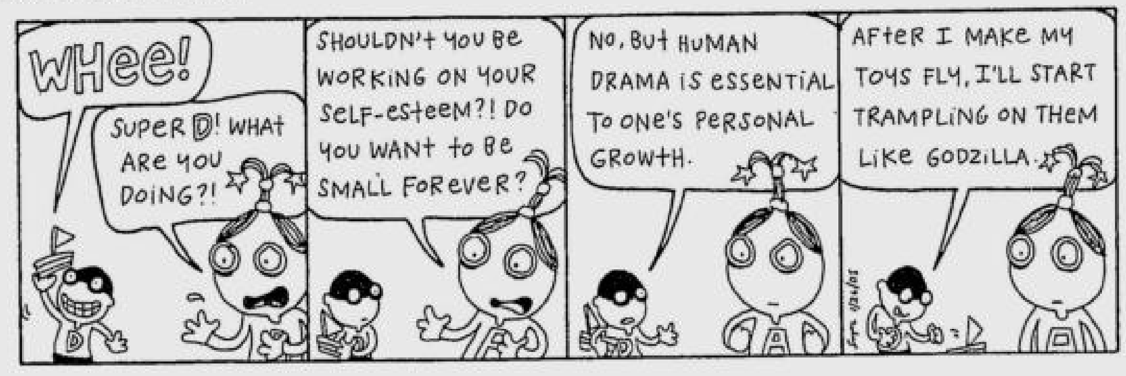
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


mutts comics.com 1-26
IT DIDN'T GO WITH THE DRAPES.
CRASH

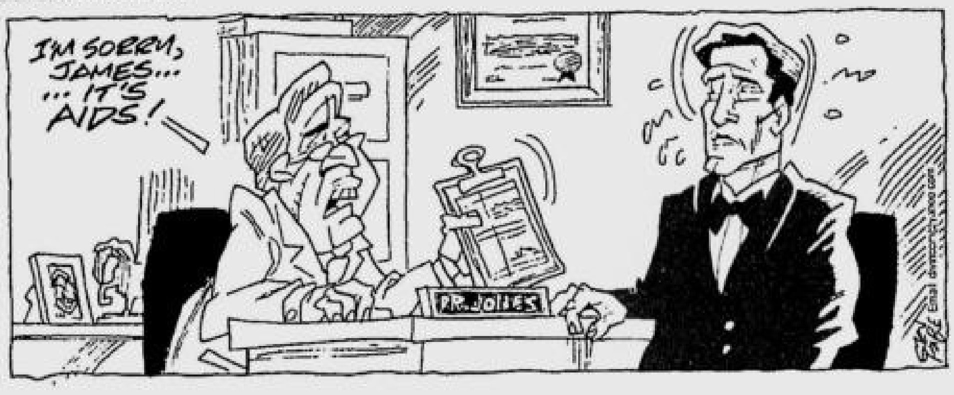
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WHEE!
SUPER D! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SHOULDN'T YOU BE WORKING ON YOUR SELF-ESTEEM?! DO YOU WANT TO BE SMALL FOREVER?
NO, BUT HUMAN DRAMA IS ESSENTIAL TO ONE'S PERSONAL GROWTH.
AFTER I MAKE MY TOYS FLY, I'LL START TRAMPLING ON THEM LIKE GODZILLA.

DIVINE COMEDY

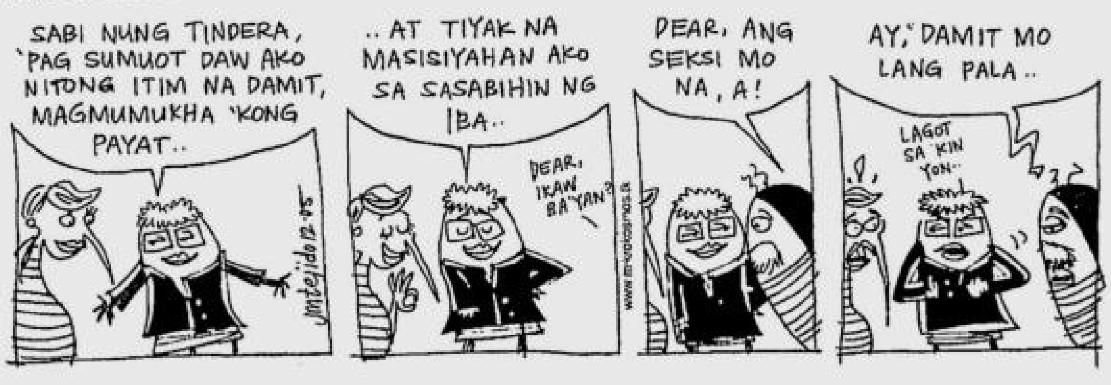
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


I'M SORRY, JAMES... ...IT'S AIDS!
DR. JONES

JAMES BOND'S PHILANDERING DAYS ARE OVER

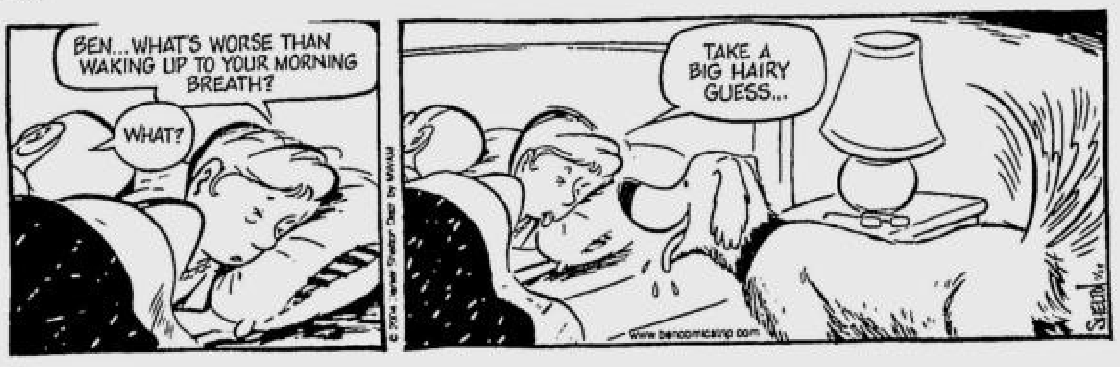
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SABI NUNG TINDERA, 'PAG SUMUOT DAW AKO NITONG ITIM NA DAMIT, MAGMUMUKHA 'KONG PAYAT..
..AT TIYAK NA MASISIYAHAN AKO SA SASABIHIN NG IBA..
DEAR, IKAW BA 'YAN?
DEAR, ANG SEKSI MO NA, A!
AY," DAMIT MO LANG PALA..
LAGOT SA 'KIN 'YON..

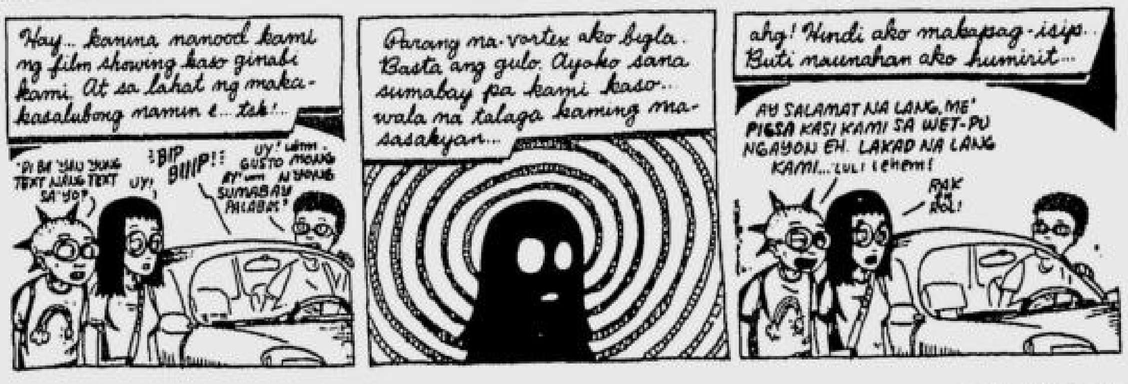
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


BEN... WHAT'S WORSE THAN WAKING UP TO YOUR MORNING BREATH?
WHAT?
TAKE A BIG HAIRY GUESS...
www.bencomicstrip.com

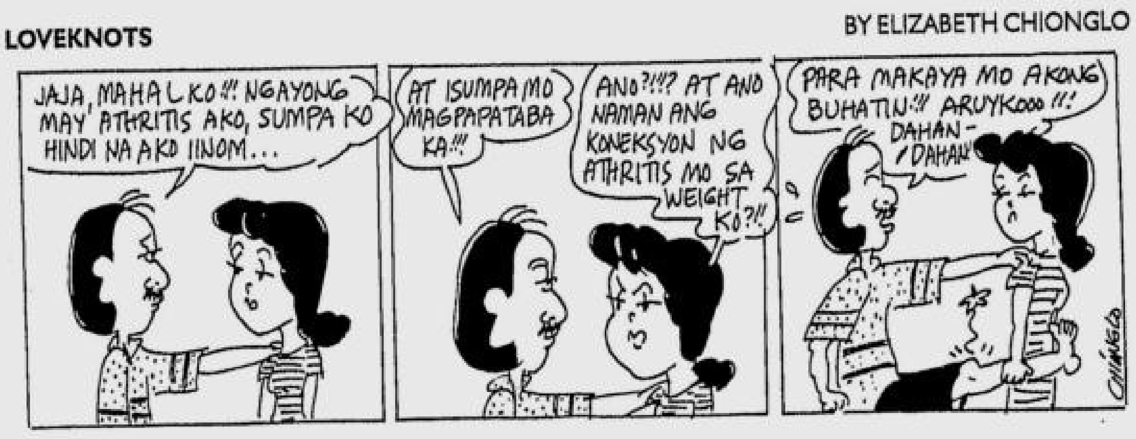
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Hay... kanina nanood kami ng film showing kaso ginabi kami. At sa lahat ng makakasalubong namin e... tsk!...
BIP BIIIP!!
UY!
Parang na-vortex ako bigla. Basta ang gulo. Ayoko sana sumabay pa kami kaso.. wala na talaga kaming masasakyan...
ahg! Hindi ako makapag-isip.. Buti naunahan ako humirit...
AY SALAMAT NA LANG, ME' PIESA KASI KAMI SA WET-PU NGAYON EH. LAKAD NA LANG KAMI...

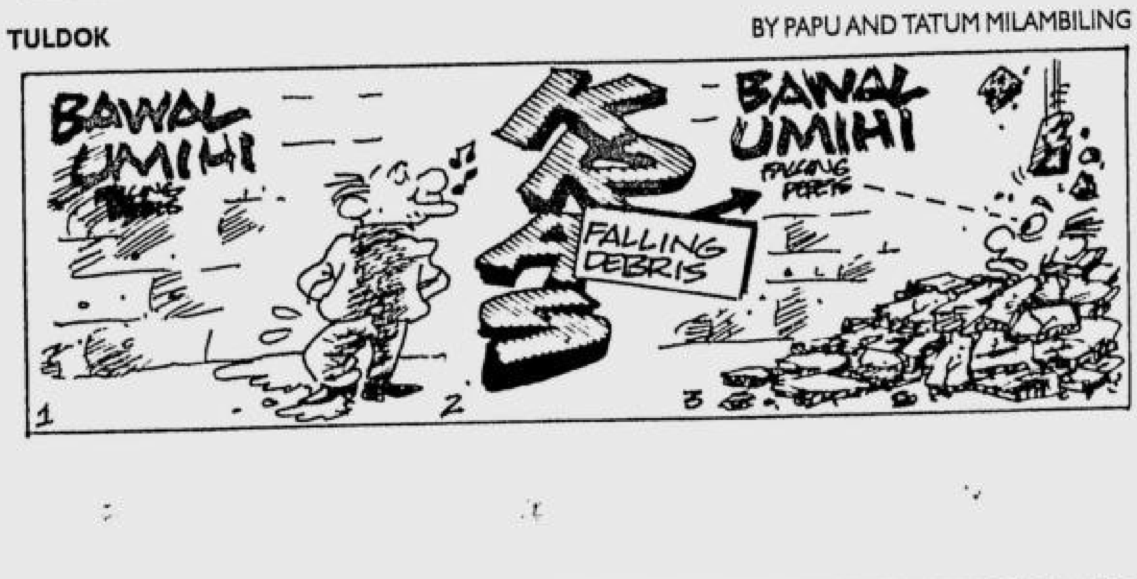
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JAJA, MAHAL KO!!! NGAYONG MAY ATHRITIS AKO, SUMPA KO HINDI NA AKO IINOM...
AT ISUMPA MO MAGPAPATABA KA!!!
ANO?!!? AT ANO NAMAN ANG KONEKSYON NG ATHRITIS MO SA WEIGHT KO?!!
PARA MAKAYA MO AKONG BUHATIN!!! ARUYKOOO!!!
DAHAN-DAHAN
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


BAWAL UMIHI
BAWAL UMIHI
FALLING DEBRIS
1
2
3

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have dramatic flair and self-confidence. This makes you attractive in the eyes of others. Because you're an independent individual, you often encounter controversy in your life; however, this never holds you back. You're determined and goal-oriented. Nothing daunts you. The year ahead might be one of the best years of your life!

Birthdate of: Douglas MacArthur, general; Ellen DeGeneres, comedian/actress; Paul Newman, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): A conversation with a friend (or perhaps even a group) is unusually intense today. You want to win others over to your way of thinking. Stick to the issues. Don't get hung up on victory.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Conversations with a parent, boss or authority figure will be memorable today. You're putting a lot of yourself into what you have to say. (This makes you extremely persuasive.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid political and religious arguments with others today. You passionately identify with your beliefs right now. This makes it hard to see the other side (in fact, it's impossible!).

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your research skills are fabulous today! If there's anything you need to search out or learn more about, you're there! You're like a dog with a bone.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Conversations with partners and close friends are quite intense today. You will definitely say what you mean and mean what you say. However, others are just as strong! (Be careful.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You can get a lot done at work today. Because you speak with authority, others will listen. Your belief in what you are so strongly proposing is why you're convincing.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're very persuasive talking to children and young people today! You're like the Pied Piper. They will follow you anywhere.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're determined to make improvements at home or perhaps within your family. Don't let your determination make you lose sight of the bigger picture.

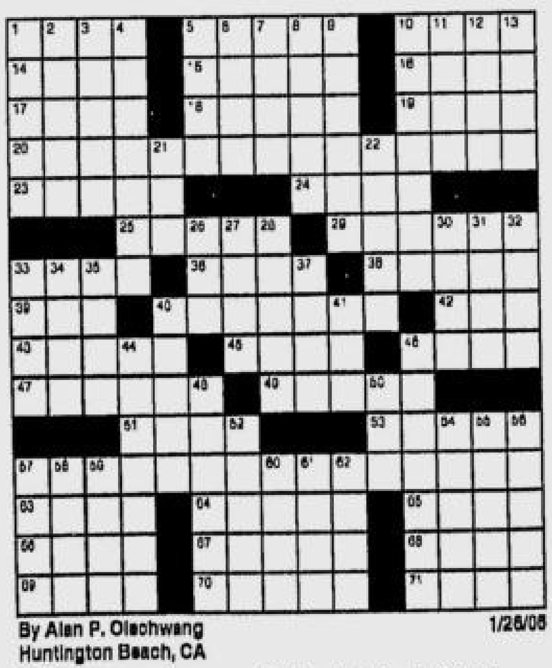
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Today you can market, sell, teach or convince anyone of anything simply because you believe in what you're saying. As the old saying goes, a good product sells itself.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might have some excellent moneymaking ideas today. If so, you can persuade others to agree with you. If you make a serious purchase, be sure you know what you're doing.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Both the Sun and Mercury are lined up in your sign today. This gives all your thoughts a hard-edged determination. You have something to say to others now.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You can discover secrets today because you have the mind of a sleuth. Research anything you need to find out about. You have the determination to look under every rock!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
1/26/06

ACROSS
1 Stately display
5 Promenade
10 Type of school
14 Gen. Bradley
15 Jeopardy
16 Libertine
17 Rational
18 Ink ingredient
19 Actor Holliman
20 Start of e.e. cummings quote
23 Glossy fabric
24 Ham's brother
25 Drenches
29 Faces the day
33 Oven setting
36 Palindromic address
38 "Giant" ranch name
39 Part 2 of quote
40 Part 3 of quote
42 Part 4 of quote
43 Sharply defined
45 Norway's largest city
46 __ in the belfry
47 Serengeti stalkers
49 Gossipmonger
51 Exploits
53 Totally confused
57 End of quote
63 Medicinal plant
64 Colorful mounts
65 Stable dweller
66 Leslie Caron film
67 Stingless bee
68 Met highlight
69 Abound
70 Favorable responses
71 Vichy very

DOWN
1 Military stations
2 Nebraskan metropolis
3 "Olympia" painter
4 Argument's proposition
5 Simians
6 Thaw
7 Make beer or coffee
8 Soma beans
9 Inventor Gray
10 Early neonate
11 Kerouac book, "On the __"
12 Continental currency
13 Ill-gotten gains
21 Lennon's love
22 __ incognita
26 GPs' org.
27 Pugilist's triumph
28 Pert
30 Thompson of "Family"
31 French state
32 Utters
33 Musical family name
34 Comrade
35 "Twittering Machine" painter
37 5,280 feet
40 Northern constellation
41 Male progeny
44 Mighty Ducks' home
46 Tub accessory
48 Substantially made
50 Label
52 Put in mothballs
54 Bart or Ringo
55 Unearthly
56 Vicinities
57 Cartoonist Kelly
58 Nastase of the nets
59 Lacquerware
60 Vietnam neighbor
61 Actress Bancroft
62 Employs

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	N	A	R	L	S	■	A	R	F	■	A	M	A	H
E	A	S	I	E	R	■	L	A	I	■	B	A	S	E
R	I	B	C	O	O	K	O	F	F	■	L	I	S	P
F	R	E	O	N	■	A	P	A	T	H	E	T	I	C
■	■	S	H	I	R	R	■	E	E	O	■	A	G	A
J	E	T	■	N	E	E	D	L	E	P	O	I	N	T
O	D	O	M	E	T	E	R	■	N	E	W	■	■	■
B	U	S	Y	■	■	M	A	B	■	■	E	T	T	U
■	■	■	T	A	R	■	N	O	M	I	N	E	E	S
J	O	S	H	B	E	C	K	E	T	T	■	X	K	E
U	T	A	■	B	M	I	■	I	N	S	E	T	■	■
M	O	T	H	E	A	T	E	N	■	O	L	I	V	A
P	O	R	E	■	K	I	D	G	A	V	I	L	A	N
E	L	A	L	■	E	E	N	■	B	E	H	E	S	T
D	E	P	P	■	S	S	A	■	C	R	U	S	T	S

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1/25/06

ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

JOEY de Leon and Vic Sotto: "*Kung mayron kaming nasabing mali ...*"

Why 'Eat Bulaga' hosts apologized

By Marinel R. Cruz

COMEDIANS VIC SOTTO AND Joey de Leon, hosts of the longest-running noontime show, "Eat...Bulaga" apologized to viewers last week, about five days after the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) reprimanded them for using "double-meaning words."

MTRCB Chair Marissa Laguardia said Vic and Joey and co-host Jose Manalo, apologized "sometime between Tuesday and Thursday last week for ... violations committed on the Jan. 3 and 4 episodes."

Said Laguardia: "They told viewers, 'We apologize *kung mayroon man kaming nasabing hindi maganda*.'"

A memo to Laguardia from special agents of the Board's Monitoring and Inspection Unit (MIU), reported that Joey violated the Parental Guidance classification when he uttered vulgar words and cracked lewd jokes in the "Bulagaan" segment of "Eat... Bulaga."

Bone of contention was the word "*buntis*" (pregnant). Laguardia explained: "While the word is not really vulgar, it was used with [malice]."

(See box below)

Also included in the memo was co-host Jose Manalo, who hosted the show's "Mr. Pogi" segment with Wally Bayola on Jan. 3.

"We received calls complaining that Jose branded people from Quiapo as *mandurukot* (pickpockets) and snatchers," said Lalguardia.

Laguardia said she discussed the violations with Malou Choa-Fagar, executive of Television and Production Exponents Inc. (TAPE), producer of "Eat... Bulaga." The TAPE executive promised to act immediately on the complaint, the MTRCB chief added.

Laguardia said Fagar sent her a memo stating that Joey and Vic would face stiffer sanctions if they violate MTRCB rules and regulations again, and Jose would be suspended.

... and why the MTRCB was irked

IN "BULAGAAN" ON JAN. 4, Joey told co-host Francis Magalona: "*Makakabuntis ka itong taon na ito... Napakalinaw, sais at nuebe* (cards held by Julia Clarete). *Ikaw makakabuntis* (to Francis). *Ikaw mabubuntis* (to Julia)."

Joey also told Paulene Luna: "*Makakatagpo ka ng lalaking matulis... Ibig sabihin mabubuntis ka.*"

In "Mr. Pogi," Jan. 3, Jose asked a contestant: "*Batang Quiapo? Baka mandurukot ito ha... taga-Quiapo ka? 'Di ka* snatcher?"

15 RP digital films abroad

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FIFTEEN FILIPINO DIGITAL FILMS WILL BE shown in two forthcoming festivals abroad.

Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival's competition director Laurice Guillen reported: "One full-length and three short films from the first Cinemalaya were invited to the 19th Singapore International Film Festival (SIFF, April 13-29)."

SIFF programmer Philip Cheah handpicked Alfred Aloysius L. Adlawan's full-length drama "Room Boy" and the shorts "Babae" by Sigrid Andrea Bernardo, "Blood Bank" by Pamela Miras and "Mansyon" by Joel Ruiz.

Cheah was a juror in Cinemalaya, where all four movies won individual awards.

SIFF, its website says, aims "to promote excellence among Asian filmmakers."

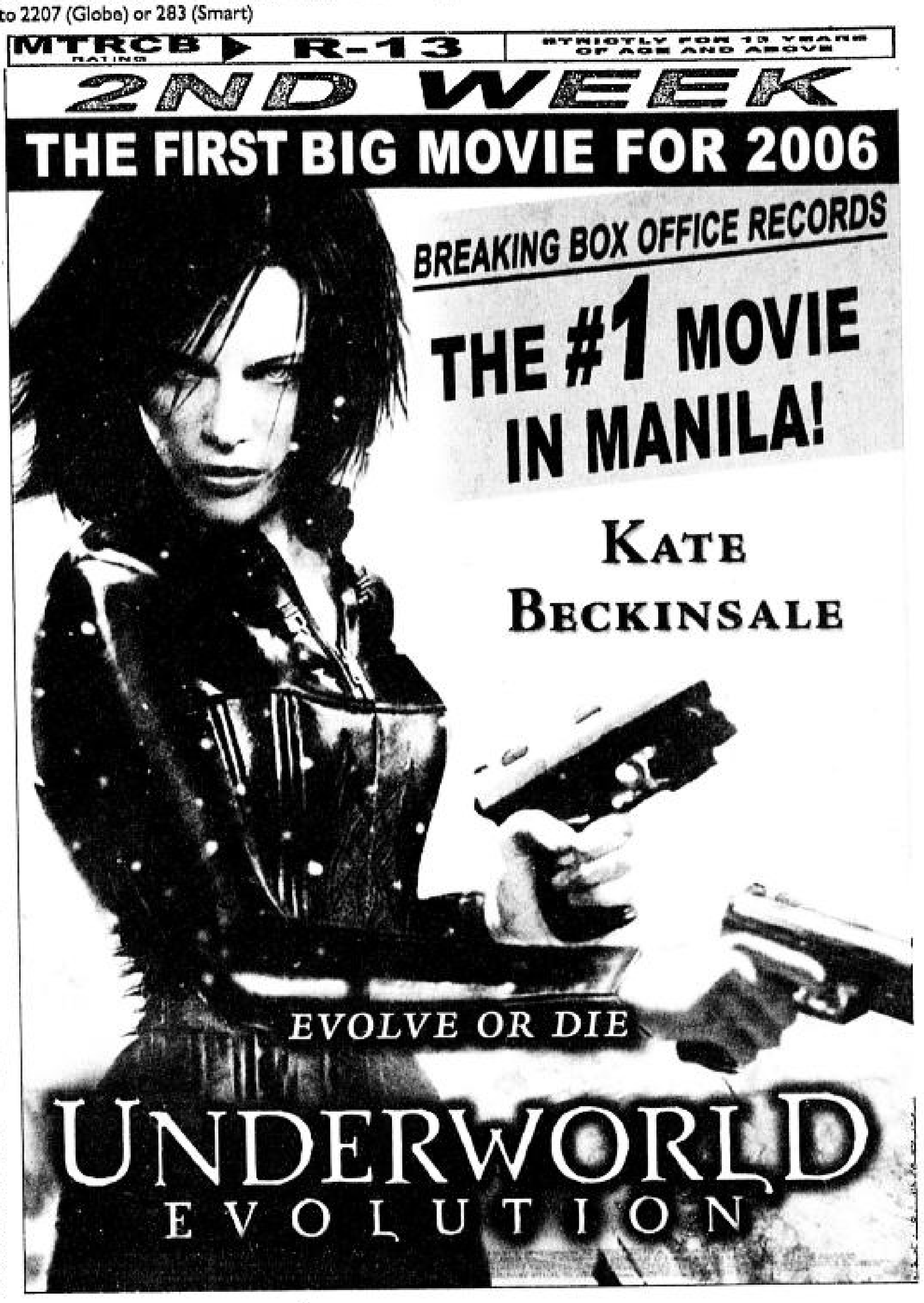
Meanwhile, RP digital movies will be screened in the 20th Fribourg International Film Festival in Switzerland (March 12-19) under a special section dubbed "The Panorama on Philippines: Digital Cinema from Revolution to Ebolusyon."

From Cinemalaya, the lineup consists of Sigfreid Barros Sanchez's "Lasponggols" and Auraeus Solito's "Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros" (full-length features); and Ruiz's short film, "Mansyon."

From the Cinema One fest are Mark Gary's "Sandalang Bahay" and Lisa Cornejo's "Sitak."

Also to be shown in the special section are Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil's "Mga Pusang Gala," Mes de Guzman's "Diliman," Khavn de la Cruz's "Pugot," Sari Lluch Dalena and Keith Sicat's "Rigodon," Rico Ilarde's "Sa Ilalim ng Cogon" and Lav Diaz's "Ebolusyon ng Isang

15 RP/ A2-4



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RUMOR HAS IT PG13 12:50,3:05,5:20, 7:35,9:50	CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP 12:30,3:30,6:30,9:30	UNDERWORLD 2: EVOLUTION R13 1:25,3:40,5:55, 8:10,10:20

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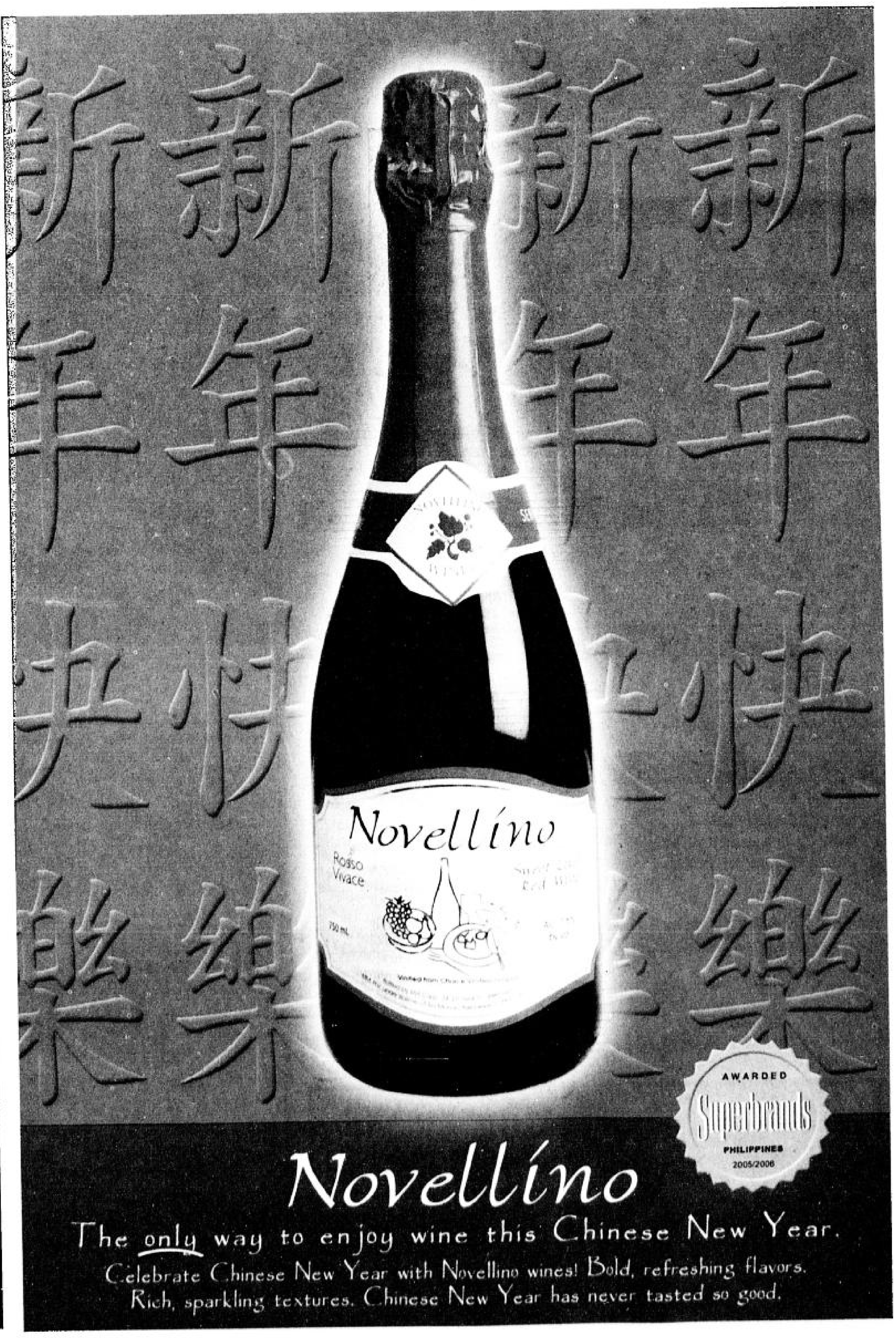
2	ZATHURA
3	HALF LIGHT
4	UNDERWORLD 2 R-13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新年快樂
新年快樂
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2 ZATHURA
3 HALF LIGHT
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
6 UNDERWORLD 2
7 THE MAID
8 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
9 RUMOR HAS IT
10 JARHEAD
LITTLE MANHATTAN

ERMITA

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1 ZATHURA
2 RUMOR HAS IT
DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 The Chronicles of NARNIA
4 HALF LIGHT
5 UNDERWORLD 2
6 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
7 THE MAID
JARHEAD

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1 ZATHURA
2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 UNDERWORLD 2
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
6 THE MAID
7 LITLLE MANHATTAN
8 JARHEAD

NOVALICHES

935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 ZATHURA
2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 UNDERWORLD 2
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
6 ZATHURA
7 THE MAID

CITISQUARE MALABON

288-2575

1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 JARHEAD
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER

687-5378

1 ZATHURA
2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
3 UNDERWORLD 2
4 THE MAID

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Cinema 1 ZATHURA
Cinema 2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
Cinema 3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
Cinema 4 UNDERWORLD 2
Cinema 5 CHEAPER BY THR DOZEN 2
Cinema 6 ZATHURA
Cinema 7 THE MAID

STA. ROSA

(049) 837-0907

1 ZATHURA
2 RUMOR HAS IT
3 LITTLE MANHATTAN
4 JARHEAD
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LIPA

(043) 757-3664
(043) 312-5870

1 ZATHURA
2 THE FAMILY STONE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 SAINT ANGE
5 JARHEAD

DASMARIÑAS

(046) 852-2125
(046) 416-4332

1 ZATHURA
2 THE FAMILY STONE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER

ANGELES

(045) 892-2348

1 ZATHURA
2 THE FAMILY STONE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER

IMUS

(046) 875-3838
(046) 471-8188

1 ZATHURA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 The Chronicles of NARNIA
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2

STARMILLS

(045) 875-1927
(045) 961-5270

1 THE FAMILY STONE
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 SAINT ANGE
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA
6 ZATHURA

BACOLOD

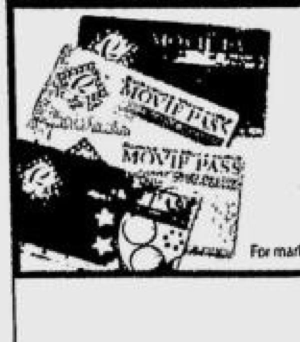
(034) 441-0453
(034) 441-0459

1 ZATHURA
2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
3 IN HER SHOES
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

ILOILO

(033) 336-8078

1 ZATHURA
2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
5 SAINT ANGE
6 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE



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Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 HALF LIGHT	2 THE MAID	3 UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION	4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 ZATHURA	2 HALF LIGHT	3 THX UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 RUMOR HAS IT	5 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	6 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2	7 THE MAID
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 ZATHURA	2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX ZATHURA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 RUMOR HAS IT GUARANTEED SEATS	4 HALF LIGHT GUARANTEED SEATS	5 UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2	2 UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION		
	3 ZATHURA	4 HALF LIGHT	5 RUMOR HAS IT	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ZATHURA	2 UNDERWORLD: EVOLUTION	3 THE FAMILY STONE	4 JARHEAD

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ZATHURA
A SPACE ADVENTURE
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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0375 Series of 2006.

Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
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② Zathura
③ Half Light
④ Underworld: Evolution
⑤ The Maid

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Gary Valenciano Pure Heart

Album Promo tour

Jan. 27, 2006, Friday, 6pm
Market! Market! Activity Center
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STAR RECORDS
GENESIS

Manny, don't!

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

Boxing champ in show biz? Bad idea

AFTER MANNY PACQUIAO'S VICTORY IN Vegas, he is now more popular than all of our local movie stars combined . Would it be wise for the "People's Champ" to venture into show biz? He hosted "Kamao" with Robin Padilla and Vina Morales. He has recorded his own CD. He's a sought-after product endorser. Talks have it that his life story will soon be made into a movie. That's the way it goes with Pinoys. Politicians become actors, beauty queens become bold stars ... everything is "show-bized"! Or, to paraphrase a rubbing alcohol ad, Pacquiao is "'*Di lang pang-isports, pang*-show biz *pa*!"

There's nothing wrong with Manny joining show biz. He has a captive audience. Pacquiao will surely PACk 'em in. But wouldn't it be better for him to stick to what he does best? He ought to save his precious energy for his next fight. One dismal flop as an actor could diminish his prestige as a boxing legend. Does he want to be like other Pinoy boxers who just faded into oblivion after their short-lived show biz career? Besides, boxing and show biz are two different things. Will he be able to stomach below-the-belt intrigues? At least, in the ring, he knows his opponent.

Of course, in show biz, he can earn big bucks without laying his life on the line. Otherwise, it's a bad idea. He is assured of film assignments and TV guestings as long as the euphoria over his victory hovers in the air. But he is not sure of getting roles that mark a real actor. A boxing icon should not end up relegated to slapstick comedy. Look what happened to Olympic silver medalist Onyok Velasco.

Fortune? Manny has this in abundance already. Fame? Show biz will not make him any more famous than he is now. He'd better not let show biz turn his historic stature into hysterics and histrionics. The Pacquiao mystique is best left intact in the same way that he kept his new boxing tactics a mystery. Isn't that how he clobbered Eric Morales? That's exactly how he will keep winning us over and over again. He should also remind himself that, in a different sense, scarcity is also power.

World's No. 1

Catch the world's No. 1 DJ, Paul Van Dyk in "The Politics of Dancing 2" (brought to you by Team BigFish) tomorrow, 9 p.m. at the World Trade Center. Call 895-8377 or 896-6073 or logon to www.bigfishmanila.com.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com)

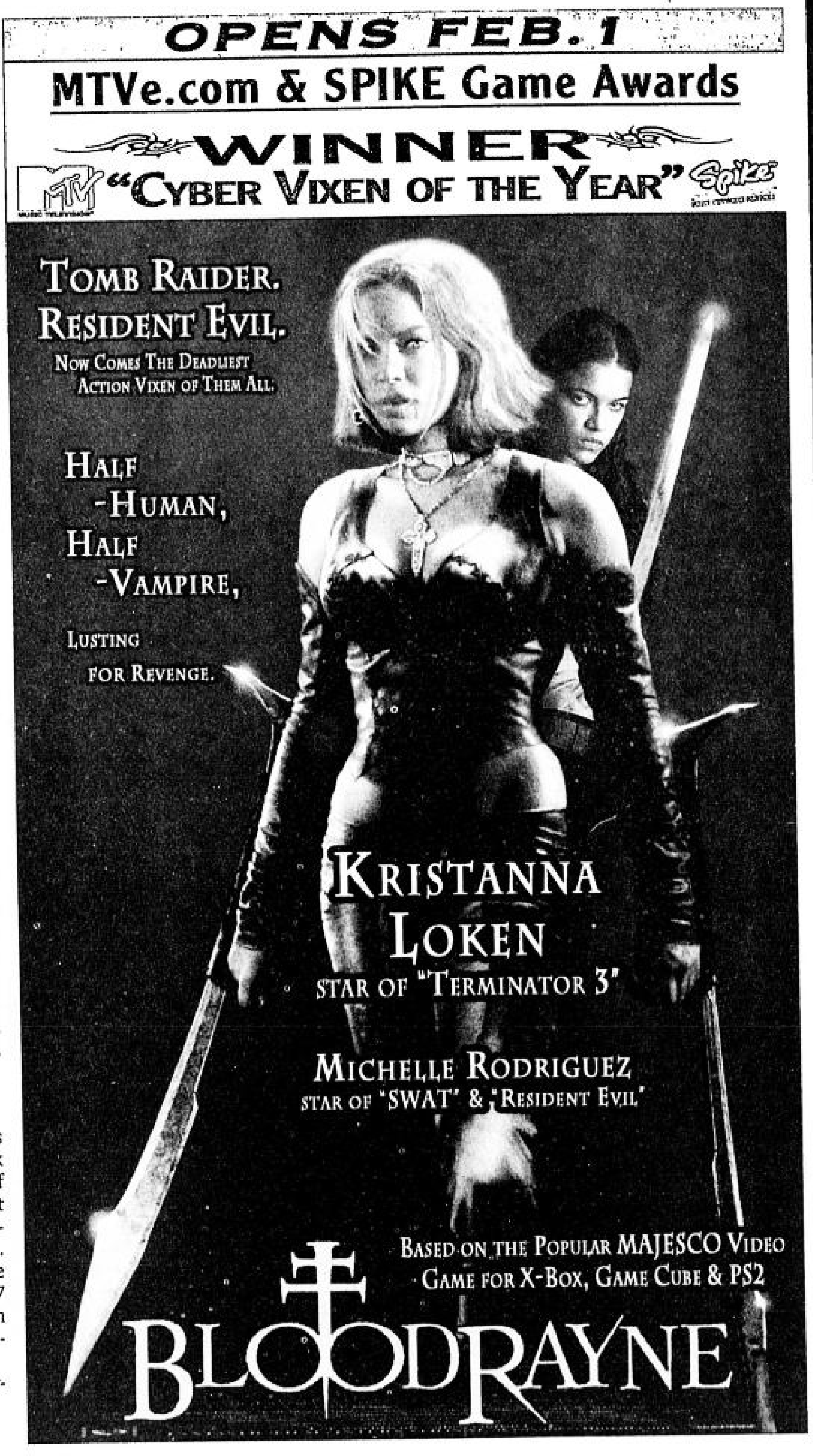
Gladys' baby

ACTRESS Gladys Reyes delivered her first baby by Caesarian section on Monday morning.

Gladys, more popular as the scheming Clara in the '90s top-rating soap, "Mara Clara," gave birth to Gian Christophe Sommereux, 8:12 a.m., at the Asian Hospital in Muntinlupa City.

She and her husband, actor Christopher Roxas, also celebrated their second wedding anniversary that day. "I plan to breastfeed him for at least three months," said the new mom.

Marinel R. Cruz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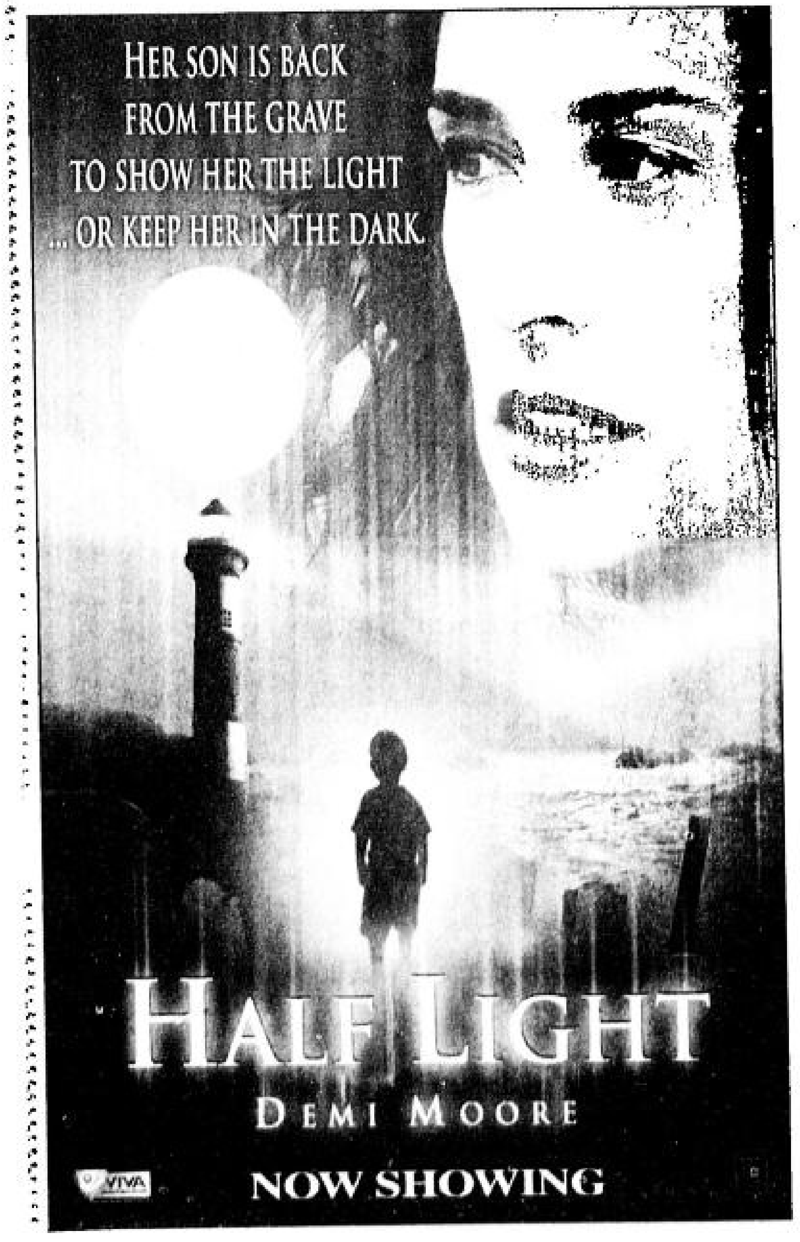
HER SON IS BACK
FROM THE GRAVE
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...OR KEEP HER IN THE DARK.
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DEMI MOORE
NOW SHOWING
VIVA

MTRCB RATING PG-13
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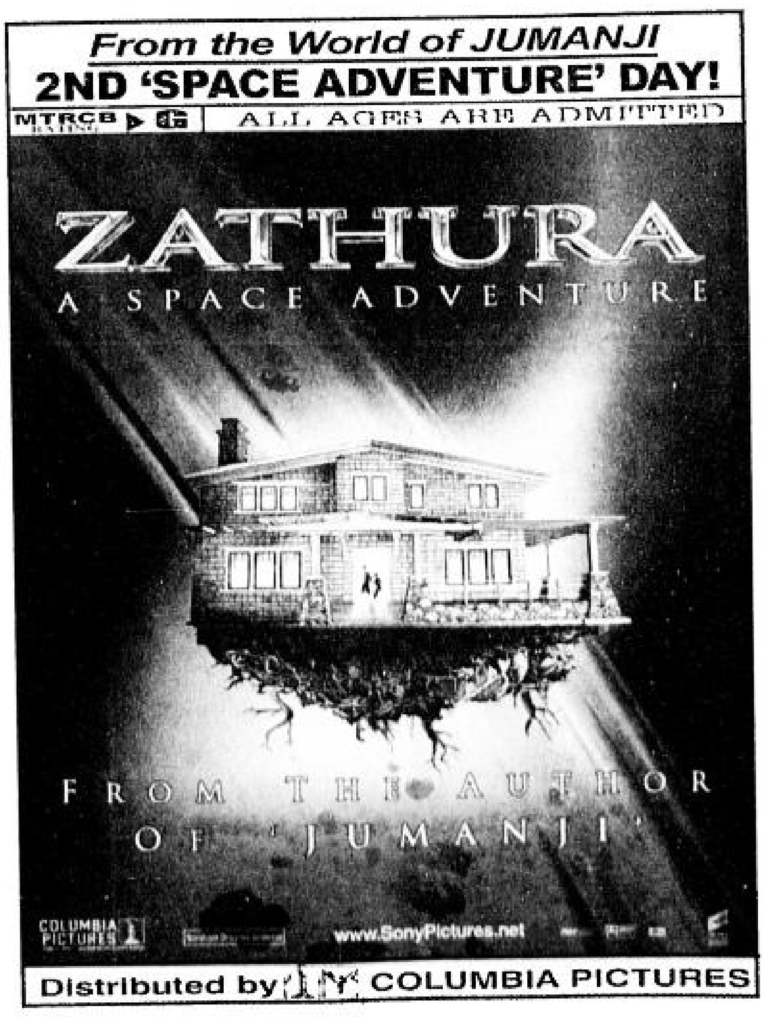
the Maid
ALESSANDRA DE ROSSI
mda
GOLDEN VILLAGE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MOVIE GUIDE

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Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY) ZATHURA GP
2 (DOLBY) UNDREWORLD R13
3 (DOLBY) CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 GP
4 (DOLBY) HALF LIGHT PG13

PREMIERE

(DOLBY) CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS) ZATHURA
2 (SDDS) KING KONG
3 (DTS) RUMOR HAS IT
4 GOLD (DTS) ZATHURA
5 GOLD [illegible] THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
6 GOLD (SDDS) UNDERWORLD-2
7 GOLD (DOLBY) CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN-2
8 [illegible] DON'T GIVE UP ON US
9 (DOLBY STEREO) HALF LIGHT
10 [illegible] THE MAID

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY) CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
2 (DOLBY) ZATHURA
3 (DOLBY) HALF LIGHT
4 (DOLBY) UNDERWORLD EVOLUTION

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 "DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 (DTS) ZATHURA
3 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 RUMORS HAS IT

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146

1 RUMOR HAS IT
2 (DOLBY) ZATHURA
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DOLBY) KUTOB

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1 PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 (DTS) JARHEAD

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1 ZATHURA
2 KUTOB
3 (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)

1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN-2
2 ZATHURA
3 THE MAID
4 UNDERWORLD-2

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 (DOLBY) ZATHURA
3 (DOLBY) CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN-2
4 (DOLBY) UNDERWORLD-2

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY) UNDERWORLD-2
2 ZATHURA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4
5 THE MAID

starmall
EDSA SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150

3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) ZATHURA
5 UNDERWORLD-2

MARKET! MARKET!
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 BLOOD FIST
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1 UNDERWORLD-2
2 ZATHURA
3 UNANG TIKIM

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8604285, 5433994

1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 ZATHURA
A B G PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 UNDERWORLD-2

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue
(Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

1 ZATHURA
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY 53) JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 ZATHURA
3 (DTS EX) KUTOB
4 FAMILY STONE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1 KUTOB
2 MULAWIN

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 UNDERWORLD-2
3 UNANG TIKIM
4 (DTS) BLOODFISH

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY) THE ZATHURA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 UNANG TIKIM
5 TRRORIST HUNTER

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan.
Telephone No. (044) 600-3026

1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 FAMILY STONE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 KUTOB
3 (DOLBY) ZATHURA
4 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 FAMILY STONE
2 ZATHURA
3 JARHEAD
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271

DON'T GIVE UP ON US
THE FOG
LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
FAMILY STONE

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 KUTOB
3 (DOLBY) THE FOG
4 (DTS) JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 KUTOB
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1 KING KONG
2 UNANG TIKIM

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Hey, Jed!

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

TAKE FIVE

World champ stars in his first major show tomorrow at Music Museum

SINCE TOPPING THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS of Performing Arts (WCOPA or the Talent Olympics) in Hollywood, Jed Madela has been working non-stop.

Tomorrow, he holds his first major concert, "The Voice Behind the Gold," at the Music Museum.

"It's my big debut [in Manila, although] I've done solo shows abroad and in the provinces," he told INQUIRER Entertainment.

The landmark show is long overdue, since Jed's album was second only to Mariah Carey's in Indonesia last year.

How did you prepare for "Voice"?

It was more of a mental preparation, psyching myself up. Since it's a first [for me], I hope to make an impression. I quit my regular gig with the band, Prime Council, so as not to strain myself.

"I HOPE to make an impression." RYAN LIM

What can your fans expect?

Songs I've never done before—Broadway, pop, even rock, opera—and surprise guests.

Rachelle Ann Go?

She'll be in the audience. Hahaha!

How's Rachelle?

We're good friends. We text and call each other because we're both busy. When I get the chance, I drop by her house.

She also won in contests abroad.

Shanghai and Kazakhstan. Before she left for Kazakhstan, I gave her tips.

Does the weather abroad affect your voice?

Luckily, it was summertime in Hollywood. But in Kazakhstan, there was snow in the mountains. I didn't join the mountain tours; I didn't want to catch a cold.

There's a perception that your Hollywood triumph was ignored.

It was acknowledged, but not as much as [the victories of] athletes and beauty queens. Maybe because Pinoys are expected to win international singing contests as a matter of routine. I hope it's just that.

What's the music in your iPod?

Right now, different types. The songs of the "American Idol" winners. My study songs for "A.S.A.P." (where he is a cast member). And of course, Rachelle Ann's songs.

Wanted: Originals

JED MADELA'S hit double CD, "Songs Rediscovered," showcases this exceptional singer's range in terms of style and power. It was a winning proposition from the start because of the selection of songs—all hits by local and foreign artists. Paging Universal Records: Jed, unmistakable talent that he is, deserves original songs written for him.

SPIN CITY

15 RP digital films abroad

From page A2-1

Pamilyang Pilipino."

The only Pinoy film that made it in the competition section is Lav Diaz's "Heremias," the story of a farmer (Ronnie Lazaro) who made a pact with God to save a girl from rape in the hands of influential men.

Diaz told INQUIRER Entertainment that a "work-in-progress" version of "Heremias" was previewed in Torino and Rotterdam. "The 'first cut' that will be shown in Fribourg is eight hours long," he said.

According to digital programmer Evelyn Vargas-Knaebel: "This year's panorama highlights ... the advent of digital filmmaking in the Philippines as a brave new world in form, substance and culture ... [and] the discovery of young and talented filmmakers with [new] sensibilities and aesthetics."

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FEBRUARY 25, 2006
SATURDAY • 8:30 PM
SM MEGAMALL CINEMA 3

GUARANTEED SEATS

THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 ZATHURA 11:50FS/12:15MF/02:25/04:35/06:45 08:25LFS/09:00LMF/10:40END
2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 11:30FS/11:55MF/02:10 03:55LFS/04:25LMF/06:10END
MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG 11:00FS/11:20MF 02:30LFS/02:50LMF/06:00END

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 11:20FS/12:30MF/02:00/04:30/07:00 09:20LFS/09:30LMF/11:50END
2 UNDERWORLD EVOLUTION 11:20FS/11:30MF/01:30/03:30/05:30/07:30 09:15LFS/09:30LMF/011:15END
3 ZATHURA 11:20FS/11:30MF/01:30/03:30/05:30/07:30 09:10LFS/09:30LMF/11:10END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
2 BIG TIME
3 ZATHURA
4 NARNIA
5 HALF LIGHT
6 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
7 WHO'S YOUR DADDY
8 RUMOR HAS IT
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 UNDERWORLD 2
11 THE MAID
12 LITTLE MANHATTAN

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 HALF LIGHT
3 NARNIA
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
5 ZATHURA
6 RUMOR HAS IT
7 THE MAID
8 BIG TIME
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 KING KONG

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 ZATHURA
2 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 UNDERWORLD 2

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 ZATHURA
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 BLUE MOON
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KING KONG
4 NARNIA
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
6 BIG TIME
7 UNDERWORLD 2
8 ZATHURA
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 THE MAID
11 RUMOR HAS IT
12 WHO'S YOUR DADDY

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ZATHURA
4 NARNIA
5 HALF LIGHT
6 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
7 WHO'S YOUR DADDY
8 BIG TIME
9 THE MAID
10 RESERVED

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ZATHURA

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 ZATHURA
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 BIG TIME
5 THE MAID
6 HALF LIGHT
7 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
8 NARNIA

SM CITY MANILA
1 ZATHURA
2 HALF LIGHT
3 WHO'S YOUR DADDY
4 UNDERWORLD 2
5 BIG TIME
6 NARNIA
7 THE MAID
8 LITTLE MANHATTAN
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 BLUE MOON
11 RUMOR HAS IT
12 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 ZATHURA
3 HALF LIGHT
4 THE MAID
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 ZATHURA
2 NARNIA
3 BIG TIME
4 ST. ANGE
5 FAMILY STONE
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 ZATHURA
2 FAMILY STONE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 NARNIA

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO
1 NARNIA
2 ZATHURA
3 WHO'S YOUR DADY
4 RUMOR HAS IT

SM CITY BACOOR
1 WHO'S YOUR DADDY
2 THE MAID
3 ZATHURA
4 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
5 UNDERWORLD 2
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 KING KONG
8 NARNIA

SM CITY MARILAO
1 ZATHURA
2 NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 IN HER SHOES

SM CITY DASMARIÑAS
1 NARNIA
2 WHO'S YOUR DADDY
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ZATHURA

SM CITY LUCENA
1 NARNIA
2 FAMILY STONE
3 THE FOG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 ZATHURA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 NARNIA
4 THE FOG

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 NARNIA
2 UNDERWORLD 2
3 ZATHURA
4 FAMILY STONE
5 BIG TIME
6 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 THE MAN

SM CITY ILOILO
1 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
2 RESERVED
3 NARNIA
4 ZATHURA
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
7 RESERVED
8 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 ZATHURA
2 THE MAN
3 FAMILY STONE
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
5 BIG TIME
6 NARNIA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 NARNIA
2 IN HER SHOES
3 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
4 ZATHURA

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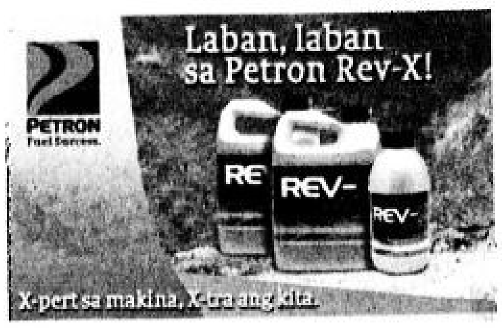
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BSP says threats to economy remain

Cites high oil prices, inflation pressures

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE HEAD OF THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has warned that while the economy was on track, the Philippines was not yet out of the woods as volatile global oil prices were curbing consumer spending and causing inflationary pressures.

In a speech before the Management Association of the Philippines Tuesday night, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco said: "There are risks that we have to manage in the years ahead. We are sure, however, to move forward if we persevere."

Tetangco said the country's improving economic fundamentals should provide a reasonable degree of optimism.

"Nonetheless, the rise in oil prices over the past year is likely to take its toll on domestic demand, particularly on consumption spending," Tetangco said.

He said government economic managers were expecting the economy to hit only the lower end of the growth target range, or 5.7 percent, this year.

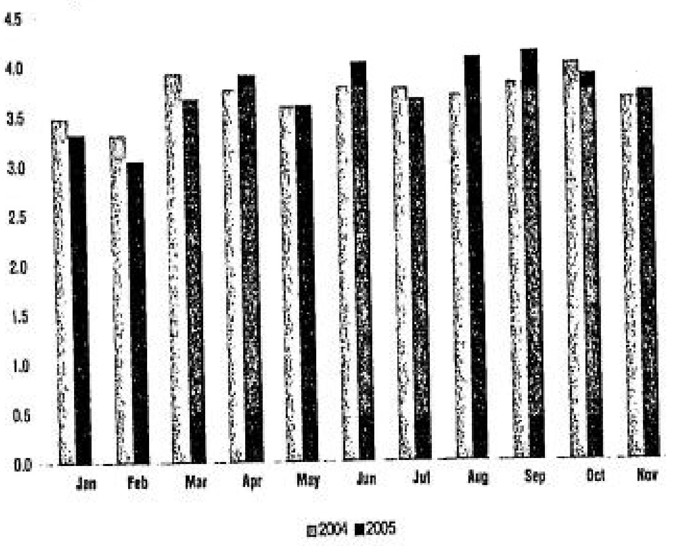
"As for inflation, it is expected to be higher in 2006, given continued upside risks," he said.

He noted that oil prices were expected to remain high while the increase in the expanded value-added tax rate would also cause short-term pressures on inflation.

However, Tetangco said inflation would likely ease in the second half of 2006 given the expected softening of oil prices and the appreciation of the peso against the US dollar.

BSP/B2

TOTAL IMPORTS
January to November 2004 and 2005, in billion US$



Imports up 1.4% on higher oil prices

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S IMPORTS ROSE by 1.4 percent to $3.71 billion last November from a year earlier, but the increase was due mainly to higher oil prices rather than a pickup in demand.

Data from the National Statistics Office showed that while the value of total imports went up, that of electronics slid by 1.5 percent to $1.8 billion. Analysts said this indicated a weak performance for electronics exports, the country's main dollar-earner, as more than 90 percent of their components are imported.

"Our exports are heavily import-dependent, so if imports are hardly moving, then it reflects weak (production for) exports," said Benjamin Diokno, economics professor at the University of the Philippines.

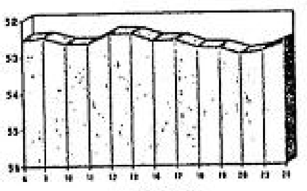
The NSO reported yesterday that the latest imports data brought the January-to-November figure to $40.94 billion, or a measly 0.4-percent higher than the year-ago level.

Exports for the first 11 months of 2005 stood at $37.298 billion, growing by 2.5 percent from a year earlier, but the expansion was much less than the government's target of 10 percent.

The country's balance of trade, the difference between exports

IMPORTS/B2

INDICATORS



JANUARY

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 52.46 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 25, 2006

¥ 114.97 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 25, 2006

GOLD: **$558.50-559.00**

per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 25, 2006

STOCK MARKET

Shares close 0.43% higher

SHARE prices closed 0.43 percent higher yesterday as investors bought back into PLDT and were reassured by easing crude oil prices, dealers said.

A better-than-forecast 2005 government

SHARES/B2

Japan's DoCoMo seen buying 5% PLDT stake

JAPAN'S BIGGEST MOBILE OPERATOR NTT DoCoMo Inc. will buy about 5 percent of Philippine Long Distance Telephone (PLDT), the largest telecoms firm in the Philippines, for about $300 million, sources close to the matter told Reuters in Tokyo.

The sources said the deal, which would strengthen DoCoMo's presence in Asia, could be announced as early as Jan. 31.

The deal would also solidify PLDT's relationship with DoCoMo, which was one of the world's first operators to launch high-speed advanced mobile services, as its mobile unit prepares to launch a third-generation (3G) network.

DoCoMo, a unit of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. (NTT), is likely to buy the stake from NTT's long-distance unit NTT Communications, which holds a roughly 14-percent stake in PLDT, sources said.

Officials at DoCoMo declined to comment. PLDT spokesman Ramon Isberto said, "We have ongoing discussions on this matter and as of this time, this has not been concluded."

DoCoMo's move is the latest in a series of purchases as it dips its feet back into international waters after seeing previous investments sour.

The company said last month it would buy a 10-percent stake in South Korea's KTF Co. Ltd. for about $560 million, gaining a foothold in one of Asia's most advanced mobile markets.

The alliance with KTF was DoCoMo's first major investment in an overseas operator since it pulled out of AT&T Wireless Services Inc., Dutch operator KPN Mobile N.V. and Hutchison 3G UK Holdings Ltd. (3UK) after incurring heavy losses.

DoCoMo had spent nearly $17 billion in the past decade to buy small stakes in operators around the world to promote the use of its i-mode mobile Internet technology and ensure the adoption of high-speed 3G networks on the same W-CDMA standard that it uses.

A PLDT official said in early January that DoCoMo and Nokia Networks, a unit of Finnish mobile phone giant Nokia, had agreed to serve as technical partners for Smart Communications, the mobile subsidiary of PLDT, when it rolls out 3G services, which would allow users to surf the Internet and download applications at high speeds.

Reuters

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Duh, the math!

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

OUR HERO IN THE BOARD OF EQUITABLE PCI Bank, the former Environment Secretary Fulgencio Factoran Jr., is now singing a different tune.

Factoran is a nominee of our pension fund, the SSS itself, to the board of the country's third biggest bank. But insiders say that he now sings praises about the "advances" made by the SM group of Henry "Tatang" Sy toward the much-coveted, desirable bank.

As a minority stockholder in Equitable PCI, the SM group is moving heaven and earth (plus of course Malacañang) to merge it with another bank that it controls, the 9th biggest Banco de Oro.

For the SSS, and its 20 million or so members, the merger is not exactly something to die for.

Factoran sat in the Equitable PCI board originally as a nominee of another government-run pension fund, the GSIS.

At that time, Factoran fought tooth and nail for our interest (as SSS and GSIS members) against the private interest of the former board controlled by the Go family.

What changed Factoran's mind is really beyond me. I don't know if he is merely following orders from "upstairs."

* * *

TO THE insiders, the merger "plan" is already a certainty. The known hatchet man of the SM group in the Equitable PCI board is a former bank executive named Vicente Panlilio.

According to my sources, even as a mere board member, Panlilio loves to go around the bank premises, telling management and staff that he will soon replace the current president, Rene Buenaventura.

He is said to be dropping the name of Mike the Knife (a.k.a. the First Gentleman, Miguel Arroyo).

Panlilio is the same guy who was seen in Hong Kong recently with the First Gentleman, together with SM group heir-apparent Tessie Sy, stockbroker Vivian Yuchengco, and DBP boss Rey David, who is rumored to be the next SSS head.

Not so long ago, Panlilio used the same tactic in the sequestered UCPB, proclaiming to everybody that he would become its chairman.

Over at another bank, the semi-government PNB, he subsequently projected a high profile as its next government-nominated president.

Luckily for us SSS and GSIS members, Panlilio does not really have a spotless record in fortune telling.

* * *

THE THING is, the merger of Equitable PCI with Banco de Oro--or for that matter any bank at this point--is not good for the SSS and GSIS members.

Together, the pension funds hold nearly 40 percent in Equitable PCI, for which investors will pay a handsome premium.

After the merger, if it does happen, the SSS and GSIS holdings will be diluted to a negligible minority.

In other words, they can never hope to recover almost P20 billion that they invested in the bank. They will be locked in--maybe even longer than forever.

Nobody will want to buy them out of the bank, for sure, because nobody will want to be in the minority position in a bank that is controlled by the SM group.

But here's the good news: GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia already set a bidding for the 14-percent holdings of GSIS in the bank.

Methinks that SSS should join GSIS in the public bidding. There is no other way--with or without "orders" from that somebody big in the Palace.

The last time I checked, a foreign buyer of the GSIS stake was willing to pay P92 a share.

Under the SM group's merger proposal, in effect, the SSS and GSIS holdings only get a valuation of P60 a share, at the most.

Helloooo—just do the math! Duh!

FPHC shares down ahead of FirstGen listing

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SHARE PRICE OF FIRST PHILIPPINE Holdings Corp. (FPHC), the holding firm of the energy-related investments of the Lopez Group, dropped 6.7 percent yesterday ahead of the pricing date for unit First Gen Corp.'s public offering next month.

FPHC closed at P48.50, lower than its previous close by P3.50.

The FPHC Group holds roughly 88 percent of First Gen.

Stock market sources said foreign brokers led by UBS and CLSA, who are also the international underwriters for First Gen's IPO, were the biggest sellers of FPHC shares yesterday.

Sources added that the market was speculating that the First Gen will offer its IPO shares at the lower end of its P51 to P62 price range.

Sources at the Securities and Exchange Commission said that as of press time, there was no request filed by First Gen to amend its offer price.

First Gen is scheduled to start its domestic offer on Jan. 31, with actual listing to follow on Feb. 10.

"It is not cheap. At P51 a share, it is 10 times price-to-earnings. There are better bargains out there," a broker at a local brokerage firm said.

"It is not cheap versus independent power producers in the (Asian) region which are trading at between 7 to 11 times price-to-earnings," another brokerage firm said.

First Gen is set to offer 180.8 to 219.9 million new shares and 125 million previously owned shares.

Big banks' bad loans down in '05, BSP says

Banco de Oro recorded lowest NPL ratio

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST PUBLICLY LISTED banks saw their bad loan ratios declining further as of end-2005, with retail tycoon Henry Sy's Banco de Oro Universal Bank reporting the lowest at 4.19 percent of total loans.

Based on the latest Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas data for the whole commercial banking sector, the industry's average NPL ratio stood at 8.7 percent, the lowest in close to eight years.

Other banks which beat the industry's average NPL ratio were Equitable PCI Bank (4.7 percent), Bank of the Philippine Islands (6.76 percent) and Union Bank of the Philippines (6.86 percent).

The NPL ratio of the country's biggest bank, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., was almost at par with industry norm at 8.28 percent, improving its ratio from double-digit levels.

On the other hand, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and Philippine Bank of Communications reported double-digit bad loan ratios of 10.22 percent and 20.71 percent, respectively.

These figures were based on the statement of financial conditions reported by these banks as of Dec. 29, the cut-off date set by the BSP.

The banks reported a slowdown in their NPL ratio compared to the previous quarter.

BDO, the seventh biggest bank, reported a decline in its bad loan ratio from 5.3 percent at end-September. Its bad loans as of Dec. 29 amounted to P4.41 billion.

EPCIBank, which BDO is trying to merge with, reported bad loans of P7.18 billion or 4.7 percent of total portfolio.

The country's third biggest lender recorded a 5.3-percent bad loan ratio a quarter ago.

The country's second biggest bank, BPI, reported P15.73 billion in bad loans or 6.76 percent of its loan portfolio versus a 7.85-percent ratio at end-December.

Union Bank's bad loan ratio of 6.86 percent was equivalent to P4.05 billion worth of bad loans.

A quarter ago, its bad loans accounted for 7.89 percent of its loan portfolio.

Metrobank reported bad loans of P23.82 billion or 8.28 percent of its loan portfolio versus a ratio of 11.13 percent a quarter ago.

RCBC reported P8.47 billion in NPLs equivalent to 10.22 percent of its portfolio.

Although still at double-digit levels, this was an improvement from the 11.36-percent ratio a quarter ago.

PBCOM, which is undergoing a government-assisted rehabilitation, reported P3.33 billion in bad loans or 20.71 percent of portfolio versus 20.93 percent a quarter ago.

Two years ago, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Co. extended a P7.6-billion financial package to the bank to cover losses arising from the sale of idle assets at substantial discounts of as much as 80 percent of market value.

URC overseas marts sales up as of Sept. '05

BRANDED FOODS MANUFACturer Universal Robina Corp. said sales from its markets overseas grew 14.8 percent to P6.99 billion as of September last year from P6.1 billion the previous year, the company said in its preliminary prospectus filed with the stock exchange.

Net sales from URC's international branded consumer foods accounted for 22.7 percent of the company's total sales.

URC's international operations, however, suffered operating losses of P340.1 million as of September last year from P165.5 million in the same period in 2004.

URC attributed these losses to the costs of expanding its international businesses. Lower selling prices in some markets like Indonesia also contributed to the losses.

In certain countries, URC's profitability was also subject to pressure from higher distribution costs as well as the increase in operating expenses, such as salaries of new employees.

URC's international markets include Thailand, which pitched in P2.76 billion in net sales last year, Indonesia (P2.24 billion), Malaysia (P1.34 billion), China (P264.4 million), Hong Kong (P200.1 million), Singapore (P170.8 million) and Vietnam (P19.4 million).

To improve net sales and profitability in some overseas markets, such as China and Indonesia, URC has embarked on a restructuring program.

URC recently consolidated its manufacturing and management functions in China as well as appointed local, experienced key executives and managers in China. URC also recently changed the management in its Indonesian business.

Despite the losses, URC continues to expand in international markets.

Last year, it established a new biscuit plant in Thailand and a candy and snack production facility in Vietnam. It also beefed up spending for advertising and promotion for product launches in various international markets.

URC also intends P3.4 billion, representing a portion of the net proceeds its $83.6 million share offering to fund the expansion of its beverage line in Vietnam as well as additional snack lines in China, ASEAN countries and Vietnam as well.

URC has recently been successful in growing its market in the country through the launch of its tea-based beverage, C2 brand last October 2004.

The brand contributed 3 percent to URC's total net sales in its first year of operation.

Recent sales of C2 have increased in line with the market's growing acceptance of non-carbonated beverages. Last September, URC forged a separate business division for its beverage line to continue building this business.

C2's sales volume has increased steadily to 680,000 cases last December from 28,000 cases in October 2004. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Imports up 1.4% . . .

From page B1

and imports, ended with a deficit of $3.64 billion in the 11 months to November, lower than the $4.37 billion in the same period in 2004.

Diokno said the country's exports were expected to grow by less than 5 percent in 2006 if the decline in global demand for electronics continued this year. Should the demand recover, then exports could grow by 8 percent.

But the economist warned that the sluggish export performance was not only due to the decline in global demand, but also to the stiff competition from other electronics-exporting countries like China, India and Vietnam.

The National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) has projected a 10-percent growth in exports this year, or the same as last year's goal.

It has been pushing for the diversification of the country's exports away from a heavy reliance on electronics for the country to be shielded from risks of weakening demand.

The slowdown in demand for electronics was partly blamed on high oil prices, which reached record highs last year.

Diokno said the problem of high oil prices was not expected to ease this year, projecting that the Dubai crude would average between $50 and $60 a barrel.

Shares close . . .

From page B1

budget deficit and expectations of stronger corporate earnings for the past year also boosted sentiment, they said.

The composite index rose 9.12 points to 2,112.49 after trading between 2,103.37 and 2,122.60. Volume was 1.4 billion shares worth P950.05 million.

The broader all-shares index advanced 19.28 points to 1,006.20.

Gains led losers 44 to 36, with 42 stocks unchanged.

PLDT drove the rebound after a report major shareholder First Pacific of Hong Kong planned to increase its stake in the Philippines' largest telecommunications firm, dealers said. PLDT rose P45 to P1,795.

"Renewed foreign interest in PLDT is a vote of confidence not just in the company but also in the economy," said Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities.

He said Asian equities markets were making a comeback after being shaken last week by a spike in oil prices and fraud allegations surrounding Internet firm Livedoor in Tokyo.

"They have now settled down and have gotten back their composure although some risks still remain," Aguila said.

AB Capital Securities research head Jose Vistan said investors have also started to take positions before the two percentage-point increase in the 10 percent value-added tax rate on Feb. 1, which is seen to further boost the government's finances. *AFP*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 25, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	37	36	37	339,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59	59	57.5	57.5	1,042,900
China Banking Corp.	600	600	600	600	40
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	61	62	60.5	60.5	131,200
International Exch. Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	38,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	30	30	29	29.5	1,070,200
Philippine National Bank	32.5	32.5	32	32	8,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14	14	14	14	1,200
Security Bank Corp.	37	37	37	37	24,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	31	31	31	31	2,100
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Manulife Financial Corp.	3150	3150	3100	3100	60
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	1,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2120	2120	2120	2120	830
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	51.5	51.5	48.5	48.5	1,989,400
Manila Electric Co. A	13.5	13.75	13.5	13.75	4,500
Manila Electric Co. B	21.25	22	21.25	22	2,206,300
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.4	2,073,000
Petron Corp.	4.85	4.85	4.75	4.75	1,971,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.26	300,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	2,000
CADP Group Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	31,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	38.5	39	38.5	39	8,800
Pancake House Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	80,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.48	1.48	200,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63	63.5	63	63.5	159,200
San Miguel Corp. B	87.5	87.5	86.5	87	55,500
Universal Robina Corp.	20.75	20.75	20.25	20.25	88,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.36	960,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1	1.02	1	1.02	7,300,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.5	236,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0725	0.0725	0.07	0.07	1,800,000
Macondray Plastics Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	6,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.08	0.08	700,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	9.3	10	9.3	10	6,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	131,000,000
Atok-Big Wedge. Inc. B	15	15.5	15	15.25	2,200
Ayala Corp.	332.5	335	327.5	327.5	76,730
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.8	4.85	4.75	4.75	50,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.025	16,200,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.2	2.26	2.2	2.24	464,000
APC Group, Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	18,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.88	0.89	0.88	0.89	400,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	2.22	1.6	1.8	556,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	1.52	2.16	1.52	2.02	263,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.08	1.1	13,089,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	347,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	4.5	4.65	4.5	4.65	447,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	11,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.3	0.27	0.28	42,700,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.47	0.47	10,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	500,000
SM Investments Corp.	234	235	234	235	53,420
South China Resources Inc.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	20,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	200,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	50,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.25	10.5	10.25	10.25	8,020,000
Belle Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	850,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	600,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.48	1.62	1.48	1.62	8,041,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.8	1.82	1.8	1.8	179,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.235	0.235	0.23	0.23	3,210,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	350,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.49	0.5	0.49	0.5	13,980,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.5	1.52	1.48	1.48	4,399,000
Gotesco Land, Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.215	0.215	0.21	0.21	890,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.38	1.4	7,287,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	6,440,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.13	1,330,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6	6	6	6	95,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	20,000
SM Development Corp.	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	10,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.9	13,480,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.135	210,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.92	0.92	1,290,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	750	755	750	755	7,790
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.35	3.4	766,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1785	1795	1785	1795	65,000
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.175	0.165	0.165	3,490,000
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	3,000,000
Ionics Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	5,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	100,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.055	0.0575	0.0525	0.055	15,700,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
Transpacific Broadband	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	106,000
Philweb Corp.	0.029	0.029	0.028	0.029	565,000,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.86	1.86	1.86	1.86	25,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.75	12	11.5	12	2,480,100
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	20,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	20,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.7	1.74	1.7	1.74	4,753,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	1,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	350,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	80,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	8.9	8.9	3,000
Ipeople Inc.	3	3	3	3	148,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Paxys Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.8	7.9	3,018,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.16	1.16	1.1	1.16	2,306,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.6	1.68	1.6	1.64	1,470,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.007.	0.007	0.007	0.007	60,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.1	6.1	5.9	5.9	396,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1	2,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	3,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.22	0.225	0.22	0.225	4,260,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	6,480,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	107,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	82,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	20,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.38	1.46	1.38	1.4	1,553,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.1	2.18	2.08	2.16	8,806,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26	26	25.5	26	355,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.26	310,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	136,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.0085	75,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	90,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	130,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	4.1	4.15	4.1	4.15	176,000

BSP says threats . . .

From page B1

While economic performance appeared to be on track, Tetangco said the BSP remained watchful of other potential risks and challenges aside from high oil prices, among them a build-up of excess liquidity in the financial system; possible exchange rate volatility due to excess liquidity, and adverse shifts in the public's inflation expectations.

He said the BSP remained committed to promote low and stable inflation, strengthen the financial sector, improve its own supervision capacity and boost the capital markets.

"The BSP also actively seeks to widen the investor base of the local financial markets through a number of new investment products which would better reflect market prices," Tetangco said. "These will help encourage more institutional investors such as insurance companies, mutual funds and pension funds to participate in the capital market."

CURRENCIES

January 25, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.814399	1.000000	52.7470
Japan	Yen	0.007105	0.008724	0.4602
United Kingdom	Pound	1.453539	1.784800	94.1428
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.105012	0.128944	6.8014
Switzerland	Franc	0.645785	0.792959	41.8262
Canada	Dollar	0.706821	0.867905	45.7794
Singapore	Dollar	0.502095	0.616523	32.5197
Australia	Dollar	0.610952	0.750188	39.5702
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.160782	2.653224	139.9496
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.217179	0.266674	14.0663
Brunei	Dollar	0.500552	0.614628	32.4198
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000106	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.020717	0.025439	1.3418
UAE	Dirham	0.221731	0.272264	14.3611
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.227900	64.7680
Argentina	Peso	0.268335	0.329489	17.3796
Brazil	Real	0.363896	0.446828	23.5688
Denmark	Kroner	0.134038	0.164585	8.6814
India	Rupee	0.018430	0.022630	1.1937
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217376	0.266916	14.0790
Mexico	New Peso	0.077584	0.095265	5.0249
New Zealand	Dollar	0.553862	0.680087	35.8725
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013617	0.016720	0.8819
South Africa	Rand	0.134930	0.165681	8.7392
Korea	Won	0.000835	0.001025	0.0541
Sweden	Kroner	0.107929	0.132526	6.9903
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025602	0.031314	1.6517

Smart says subscriber base up 1.2M

By Clarissa S. Batino

SMART COMMUNICATIONS INC. ENDED 2005 with about 20.4 million subscribers and a plan to purge 300,000 more of non-earning customers from its base within the first quarter, the company's top official said.

Of Smart's subscriber base, about five million are Talk N' Text customers, according to Smart president Napoleon Nazareno, who is also head of parent firm Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Smart's end-2005 subscriber count was higher by only 1.2 million than its end-2004 base of 19.2 million. This indicates that the robust growth in subscriber base in the previous years (about four million a year) was artificially induced by the SIM (subscriber identification module) swap offerings of both Smart and its rival, Globe Telecom. This promotional gimmick, which started the price war between the country's top two mobile phone operators, was ended in May last year.

Nazareno stressed that the purge of Smart's subscriber base had no impact on revenue. PLDT booked more than P30 billion in profit last year. It is expecting to post a modest growth this year.

"The 2005 figures have yet to be finalized. But considering the December revenue was high, I don't think we have problems hitting the target," said Nazareno in an interview.

PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan said in November that profit in 2005 would likely hit P32 billion.

Smart and Globe had expected to complete the purging of non-earning customers that came in under the SIM-swap gimmick in December last year.

EIB owners OK P3-B cash infusion

Higher capitalization to support bank expansion, growth

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE SHAREHOLDERS OF EXPORT AND INdustry (EIB) yesterday approved an increase in the bank's authorized capital to P7.5 billion to accommodate a P3-billion fresh cash infusion.

In a special stockholders meeting yesterday, the owners agreed to beef up the bank's capital base to comply with the new international accounting standards on banks' capital, which are now imposed by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

With the additional capital, the bank said it was now prepared to also meet the requirements of Basel II, which would be implemented by the BSP in 2007.

EIB president Benjamin P. Castillo said: "This will allow the bank to focus on pursuing growth and revenue objectives, while EIB depositors and customers can now look forward to a bank that can better respond to their diverse needs and expectations."

Castillo said the bank's balance sheet took off to a bright start with a stronger capital base, high liquidity ratios, and a quality asset portfolio tracking higher than industry averages.

"We expect to deliver a profitable performance within this year and pursue aggressive growth well into making EIB one of the top banks of the country," he said.

The bank plans to strengthen its strategic market presence in the emerging corporate accounts, trade and small and medium enterprise sectors, as well as establish its role as a major player in the consumer, retail and mortgage banking markets.

Albert Cheok, incoming deputy chair of EIB and chief representative of the Lippo Group in the Philippines, said: "With the injection of P3 billion of core capital and P2 billion of Tier 2 capital, and with the balance sheet fully cleaned up, EIB is now flushed with liquidity and strongly capitalized."

"This augurs well for the future as there is now a strong foundation for future growth and profitability. There should be good and robust upside prospects for the share price," he said.

EIB stockholders led by the Lippo and Yao groups, Extra Year Investment Ltd., designated investment vehicle of the Raiffeisen Zentralbank Österreich AG (RZB) Group of Austria and AO Capital Partners Ltd. of Hong Kong form part of the team that had invested the P3 billion in fresh core capital.

The bank statement said the equity investments of these foreign investors were in line with the bank's corporate goal of establishing a regional and international presence in the near term to expand its client and market network.

"Export Bank stands to maximize the synergies arising from the above investments, resulting in global banking and financial network, transfer of technologies, sophistication in its banking and financial products and services, and a diversified and expanded client and market base," the statement said.

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Manufacturing output up 4% in Nov.

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S MANUFACTURING output, as measured by the volume of production index (VoPI), grew by 4 percent in November from year-ago level, the National Statistics Office reported yesterday.

The NSO said the growth in the volume of production by the entire manufacturing sector was due to capacity expansion in eight sub-sectors, such as furniture and fixtures, petroleum products, fabricated metal products, chemical products, rubber products, non-metallic mineral products, textile and tobacco.

The 4-percent year-on-year growth in VoPI in November reversed the 4.4-percent decline recorded in October. The NSO likewise reported that the value of production index (VaPI), which measures the growth or decline of the value of production by the manufacturing sector, grew 12.9 percent in November. This already took into account inflation. The rate of growth, however, was lower than the 15 percent registered in the previous month.

The petroleum products manufacturing sector registered the biggest increase in the value of production during the month, the NSO said in its report on the Monthly Integrated Survey of Selected Industries (MISSI).

The MISSI, likewise, covered sales performance of the manufacturing sector. Volume of net sales grew 2.1 percent year-on-year in November, thus recovering from the 0.5-percent decline in October. The value of net sales also registered 8.2 percent growth, up from the previous month's 8 percent.

The NSO also reported that the average capacity utilization of manufacturing firms stood at 80.3 percent in November, almost unchanged from the 80.4 percent recorded in October.

The NSO said the sub-sectors that registered a capacity utilization rate of at least 80 percent were machinery, petroleum, paper and paper products, miscellaneous manufactures, rubber products, leather products, basic metals, food manufacturing, chemical products and textiles.

For the whole year, Economic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos said that manufacturing output would likely come within National Economic and Development Authority's forecast range of 4.5 to 5.4 percent.

The government is set to release preliminary 2005 gross domestic product data next Monday. *With a report from AFP*

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Mindanao business tackles population management

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

POPULATION MANAGEMENT HAS been a major initiative of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and selected chambers of commerce in Mindanao (Davao, Dipolog, Gen. Santos and Tawi Tawi), as well as in Luzon and the Visayas.

It was felt that business intervention was needed to address the burgeoning problems arising from excessive population growth. More importantly, population management offers us a new horizon to look at new methodologies in improving firm productivity and competitiveness.

PCCI understands the effects of population growth and the part it plays in the development and growth of business in the Philippines. It aims to understand how population growth affects workers' productivity and the necessary interventions to improve employer-employee relations.

In 2000, Mindanao had a population of 18,233,715. It is projected to increase by 2.11 percent in 2005 to 20,289,100. Region 11 is seen to post the highest population increase in 2005 at 12.73 percent, from 5,189,335 in 2000 to 5,905,254. This is followed by Region 13 or Caraga, 11.9 percent; Region 9, 11.83 percent, and Region 12, 11.72 percent.

Surprisingly, the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao was projected to post the lowest population growth of 8.18 percent to 2,366,232 in 2005. This must be the result of efforts to provide greater access to education and health services in the region.

Data on Mindanao showed that poverty incidence to population was 44.26 percent in 1997 and up to 46 percent in 2000; per capita poverty threshold was P10,769, and per capita food threshold was P7,434. The average annual income in 2000 was P96,978 while expenditures averaged at P78,803. These figures are affected by the rate of population. The growth of business and economy should be much higher than the increase in population so that life will be better for all.

Looking closely, population determines significant economic indicators such as labor productivity, economic growth, and prevalence of diseases, well-being of women and children, mortality and poverty.

Businessmen in key centers of Mindanao now understand the implications of a high population rate and its profound impact on the sustainability of business. With the strong support of PCCI and its partners—more notably the Philippine Center for Population Development (PCPD) and PRISMS-USAID Programs, we were able to encourage nationwide participation in population management activities.

These activities include planning workshops, training modules and seminars. The idea is to help individuals and couples to come up with informed decisions and to exercise their freedom of choice.

PCCI will be conducting a nationwide consultation specifically in drafting the criteria and terms of reference for a nationwide award and recognition for all levels of business that implement or conduct population management programs in the workplace. This award will be open to all types of businesses, including small and medium sized firms, as well as multinational companies and big industries. We hope to increase awareness through our program. These are baby steps that can eventually lead to a big leap.

The strategy being implemented in the region involves a three-pronged approach—advocacy, linkages with service providers and setting up of common service facilities to cater to the eminent needs of SME workers and their families. This approach enables local chambers to be self-sufficient and to develop innovative ideas and programs that fit the specific requirements of the beneficiaries.

The Philippines still has a long way to go with respect to managing the country's growing population.

The common denominator of all the opinions on this crucial issue is the need to improve the living condition of some 30 million Filipinos in both urban and rural areas. Unless we see clear indications on how poverty can be reduced substantially, then debates on population management are just as good as a lip service. We have to run programs that go beyond talks, we need policies that go beyond debates and we need champions to step beyond their call of duties, to become advocates for social change and progress.

Setting simple goals for ourselves like developing local chamber and infrastructure, personnel, and services can be considered a sizeable improvement. But, it's not about doing extraordinary things—it's doing things in an extraordinary way.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is an advocate for Mindanao; chair, PCCI committee on population, CSR and governance; trustee, Philippine Center for Population Development; IFPLP (International Family Planning and Leadership Program) 2005 fellow. E-mail comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

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Unilab reaffirms partnership with GlobeSolutions

PHARMACEUTICAL LEADER UNITED Laboratories Inc (Unilab) has strengthened its partnership with leading business communication solutions provider GlobeSolutions for the provision of corporate mobile phone lines and value-added services. Unilab has been a valued GlobeSolutions client for five years now and the ongoing collaboration between the two companies is expected to boost Unilab's performance through more efficient mobile communication.

"Our continuing partnership with Unilab proves the potential of mobile communication to enhance business performance and productivity. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the company's relationship with its clients, employees and partners through reliable connectivity," says Globe Telecom CEO Gerry Ablaza. Enterprise business group head Gil Genio adds: "We are proud to support Unilab in their drive to achieve their corporate goals. By developing relevant solutions and ensuring immediate attention to their concerns, we hope to be able to serve their needs better."

Unilab president and CEO Carlos C. Ejercito also welcomed the partnership, saying, "With their wide array of products and responsive, personalized customer service, GlobeSolutions effectively meets our business communication needs. Having these dependable and cost-efficient connectivity options at our disposal will surely help our company in delivering outstanding service to our own customers."

According to Unilab vice president for corporate IT Francis Sogono, GlobeSolutions services have been successfully applied in almost every aspect of Unilab's business. Field personnel (medical representatives and sales) utilize PDAs from GlobeSolutions for various interactive applications with doctors and customers. They also get regular updates and SMS advisories through the TxtConnect service. The Corporate Ringback Tone, on the other hand, is consistently being used by their sales force as a marketing tool. "We started using Corporate Ringback just this year, and we've already received positive feedback from our customers, many of whom are doctors and other health care professionals. So far, it's been very effective in building brand recall," explains Sogono.

GlobeSolutions services have also been instrumental in organizing company-sponsored events and marketing activities. According to Unilab VP for international marketing Lorenzo Barros, "Unilab often hosts medical conventions and related events. Having convenient connectivity options facilitates the extensive coordination and logistics required by such projects."

Sogono likewise says he looks forward to the continued growth of the partnership with Globe. "Globe has been able to provide us with cost-effective means for information exchange, and is very cooperative in developing relevant applications suited to our business. We hope to continue working together in exploring more opportunities made possible by communications technology."

Unilab is the country's largest and leading pharmaceutical company with a significant presence in Southeast Asia. It currently avails of over wireless services from GlobeSolutions, as well as wireline services from GlobeQUEST.

For inquiries about GlobeSolutions services, call the GlobeSolutions hotline at 730-1999 or e-mail globesolutions@globetel.com.ph.

Globe Solutions

FROM left: Globe head of corporate business Dan David, Globe head of enterprise business group Gil Genio, Globe president and CEO Gerry Ablaza, Unilab president and CEO Carlos Ejercito, Unilab VP for international marketing Lorenzo Barros, and Unilab vice president for corporate IT Francis Sogono.

IBM
Maybank

MAYBANK UPGRADES TO AN IBM ESERVER ISERIES

Maybank Phils Inc (MPI) recently inked an agreement with IBM, through its accredited vendor Right Computer Systems, to upgrade their hardware platform which runs their Silverlake Banking Solution to an IBM eServer iSeries platform. It is a comprehensive and flexible solution designed to meet the information processing and management challenges facing the finance industry today. Present during the signing are (seated from left): Lee Tien Poh, senior vice president for services, MPI; Joaquin Quintos IV, country GM, IBM Phils; Lim Hong Tat, president and CEO, MPI; and Alfredo Nubla, president, RCS. Joining them are (standing from left): Pia Azarcon, IBM; Janine Laygo, RCS; Ellen Escalante, RCS; Wilmer Tam, MPI; Victor Francisco, RCS; Ato Oncinian, MPI; and Chris Padilla, IBM.

NEW BMWS TAKE FLIGHT AT LA FINCA FARM AND COUNTRY RESORT

La Finca Farm and Country Resort went into a buzz recently when sleek BMW cars and motorcycles cruised into its idyllic community in Lipa City, Batangas. BMW Autohaus Driving Experience provided a rare opportunity for La Finca homeowners and guests to cruise along the streets of its exclusive neighborhood via a test run of the latest models of BMW such as the 1, 3, 5, X3 and X5 series as well as the Motorad motorcycles. La Finca is a premier residential/farm community that has its own private Country Club, a quaint fishing lagoon circled by picnic groves and a kiddie playgound. It also has a horticultural arm, Nursery, which takes care of the planting, propagation and harvesting for individual farms of lot owners. Know more about the wonders of La Finca Farm and Country Resort. Call 889-8588, 886-4004 to 06 or 889-9999, or fax at 889-9062 or visit www.lafinca.com.ph. Photo shows the key executives and staff of La Finca Farm and Country Resort and BMW Autohaus pose during a photo opportunity held in Lipa City recently.

BITS Clips

5th Philippine Food Expo

THE ONLY ALL-FILIPINO CONSUMER FOOD industry event in the country is once again scheduled for another run on Jan. 26 to 29, at the SM Megatrade Halls, SM Megamall Bldg. B, Mandaluyong City. Relevant seminar topics such as: Mango Forum, New Business Trends, Environmental Compliance, Events Marketing: How to Choose Shows/ Events for Your Products, Business on the Web: eCommerce Challenge for Exporters, Updates on Food Safety, Supplying Food to Supermarkets, Updates on BFAD Requirements and the Mindanao Investment Forum, shall comprise the 4-day seminar line-up of the Expo. The seminars will be for 100 participants only, therefore pre-booking of chosen topic is required. A minimal fee of P200 per topic will be charged. Special events such as regional product cliniquing, Philippine Food Trivia, Creative Mango Product contest, On-the-spot Pinoy Kid Art contest are also in store for the exhibitors and the public. For booth space, seminar bookings and contest inquiries, you may call 687-0654/687-2955 or 634-3304/634-2171.

TM Power Piso offers 'per second' call rates

AT JUST 10 CENTS PER SECOND, TM SUBscribers get great discounts each time they make TM-to-TM calls. No registration is required, simply dial 803 + the 10-digit TM number (i.e., Dial 803 + 926xxxxxxx). For instance, subscribers used to pay the P5.50 per minute flat rate for a 3-second call. But with TM's new affordable call rates, subscribers need only pay P0.30 for the same call. That's more value for your money, and more reasons to call your relatives and friends. TM also introduces their lowest text rates ever: only 75| for every TM-to-TM text message. With the 15 percent savings earned per text message, TM's new text rate makes every peso count. This promo is the latest addition to TM's range of products and services that add more power to every hard-earned peso.

The Tikim Fever is on

"MAKUHA KA SA TIKIM" IS ONCE AGAIN looking for the next ultimate cooking diva for its second season. A partnership between Unilever's Knorr and ABS-CBN, "Makuha Ka Sa Tikim" is Philippine's first cooking showdown on television which celebrates today's Filipino women and their penchant for cooking. The first season has hailed Fatima Canda from Zamboanga as its Ultimate Cooking Diva. Catch the action as Cooking Divas from all over the country showcase their talent with the succeeding pre-season episodes of the eliminations in the Visayas to be shown on Jan. 28 and in Mindanao on Feb. 4. Watch out for the announcements aired in ABS-CBN, troop to the audition centers and whip your best recipe for the cook-off. Who knows, you might be the next "Makuha Ka Sa Tikim" ultimate cooking diva.

31st International Bamboo Organ Festival

THE 31ST EDITION OF THE BAMBOO ORgan Festival will take place at the St. Joseph's Church in Las Pinas City from Feb. 2 to 9, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. Six concerts spread over 8 days will once again showcase some of the finest sacred music works ever written, with a special focus on the renowned Bamboo Organ which has been designated as a Philippine national treasure, and which is housed in the church. The opening Gala invitational concert for sponsors on Feb. 2, with a repeat on Feb. 3 for the general public, is entitled Homage to Mozart, as we celebrate, along with the rest of the classical music world, the 250th birthday of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 91). The traditional pop outdoor performance, Concert Under the Trees, will take place on Feb. 4, and will feature the AngFourGettables as guest artists, together with the A Cappella Manila and Karel Marquez. On Feb. 6, Russian organist Luba Shishkhanova will perform in An Evening of Organ Music. Fiesta Musika on Feb. 7 will have an almost completely Filipino program.

Learning music the fun and easy way

THE ROYAL SOUND OF MUSIC STUDIO recently began operations to serve the growing needs of music - loving Filipinos of all ages. Conveniently located at the corner of P. Tuason St. and 13th Avenue in Cubao, in front of PNB All Mall, Royal boasts of the latest state-of-the-art musical instruments, studios and equipment available in the market today. More importantly, Royal provides the musical expertise of qualified professionals. According to Major T. Yee, EVP, Ryan Manal, AVP for operations and Roger de Leon, marketing manager of Royal, "Apart from professional competence, we have chosen teachers that are warm, friendly, patient and are into the love of music." The music studio is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays, and 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays to Sundays. For interested parties, call (02) 912-9386, or better yet, visit the Royal Sound of Music Studio.

Godiva Skin Station offers diamond peel promo

GODIVA SKIN STATION OFFERS THE BEST beauty deal in town: Buy 1 Take 1 on Diamond Peel treatment. For a fabulously affordable price of only P2,200, you can avail of two sessions of the Diamond Peel and also get a free Vitamin C Ionotherapy with every session. The Diamond Peel is today's most desirable alternative in skin care where immediate visible results include increased skin firmness, more even skin tone, minimized pores, reduced pigment marks and scars, and minimized appearance of stretch marks. The Vitamin C Ionotherapy is a perfect booster treatment following the Diamond Peel. Ionotherapy uses mild galvanic current to aid deep skin penetration of Vitamin C serum to help fight wrinkles and reduce skin damage caused by free radicals. The promo is until Jan. 31 only. For inquiries, call 751-6140 (Godiva Skin Station Makati Bel-Air) or 939-1105 (Godiva Skin Station SM Fairview Annex).

DLSU Grand Alumni Homecoming

DLSU CELEBRATES ITS GRAND ALUMNI Homecoming on March 4, at the De La Salle University, Manila Campus. Dubbed "One La Salle: sarap maging Berde" the event kicks off at 4:30 p.m. with a Mass followed by a program of awards and entertainment, plenty of food and drinks, bands and dances and fireworks. Thousands of alumni from all batches and all colleges, high school and grade school are expected to attend. Ticket is at P500. The Host Class is the Silver Jubilarian Class 81 while the Diamond and Gold are co-celebrants. Proceeds will go to scholarships as well as the "One Million Trees" reforestation initiative of the university. Pre-homecoming events, as part of the build up, include a One La Salle Badminton Tournament on Jan. 28, at the Power Smash, Pasong Tamo, Makati City and the traditional Br. Benedict Golf Cup on Feb. 27, at the Sta. Elena Golf & Country Club. Interested parties please call the De La Salle Alumni Association at 524-4611 to 26 or visit www.dlsaa.com.

Real estate briefing

A REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER IS HOSTING A big gathering of real estate brokers in the country on Jan. 30, to discuss ways on how they can fully gain from the bright prospects of the real estate industry in 2006. The event, sponsored by One Asia Development Corp, is open to all real estate brokers. It will be held at the Grand Ballroom of the Dusit Hotel Nikko along Pasay Road in Makati City from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Jan. 30. Contact 687-5135 or 634-0513 for registration. The highlight of the event will be a real estate business briefing wherein One Asia will present industry prospects, profile of the real estate market, and a listing of impressive real estate projects. The event seeks to help real estate brokers translate the bright prospects for the industry into actual sales, by providing them a thorough knowledge of the real estate market in their communities and pointing them to quality projects that are in highest demand.

'Pimped Out Love My Car 2'

INVITING ALL CAR ENTHUsiasts, join the Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers (PSME)-Mapua Student Unit "Pimped Out Love My Car Part 2" as part of the Mapua on Sale Part 2 and the 81st Foundation Day of Mapua Institute of Technology, to be held on Jan. 27, 8 a.m. at the Mapua Campus. For details please contact Angela Loresco - PSME MIT Student Unit president at 0922-3984668/0915-4485459.

XanGo holds 'City Talk at Shangri-La Hotel'

XANGO, LLC, RECOGNIZED CREATOR OF THE mangosteen supplement category, welcomes all its distributors and participants in a special city conference to be held today, 7 p.m. at Rizal C Ballroom of the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City. All independent distributors are requested to attend this special event with XanGo's top direct marketers who will personally deliver the marketing updates, reports, and calendar of activities for this year. This city talk will provide them first-hand updates on the activities of the company. For inquiries about XanGo's "City Talk at Shangri-La Hotel", please contact 818-1494 or 0920-6003347.

OLLC Homecoming

OUR LADY OF LORETO COLLEGE WILL hold its alumni homecoming on Jan. 29, Sunday, to be held at the Legarda Campus. Class '66 are enjoined to attend this affair.

UST-EHS Golden Jubilee

CLASS '56 OF UST EDUCATION HIGH School (EHS) will hold its Golden Jubilee Reunion at the Dragon Gate Restaurant, Roxas Blvd. on Feb. 18, at 6 p.m. Contact: Rolly Gil - 741-1260, Amancia Marcelo - (0919)863-2674, Chit Fortuny - 722-5759.

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY WATER DISTRICT
263 Rizal Avenue, Puerto Princesa City
Tel. Nos. 433-2408, 433-5032, 433-6802
Fax No. (48) 433-6803

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Puerto Princesa City Water District through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : Supply and Delivery of One (1) Unit Fighter Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent
Location : Puerto Princesa City Water District
Brief Description : One (1) Unit Fighter Water Tanker (Japan Surplus) or equivalent, powered by 6 cylinder diesel engine, 6 wheelers, manual transmission, 6 cubic meter water tank, original Japan stainless equipped with standard hose with roller, 900 x 200 with one spare, 8 stud bolts, brand new batteries and complete standard tools
Approved Budget for the Contract Six Hundred Thousand Pesos (P600,000.00)
Delivery Period Thirty (30) Calendar Days from the receipt of the Notice to Proceed

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least fifty percent (50%) of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

Activities	Schedule
1 Issuance of Bid Documents	January 30, 2006 – February 17, 2006
2 Pre-Bid Conference	February 8, 2006, 1 30 P M , PPCWD Board Room
3 Deadline for Submission of Bids	February 23, 2006 1 30 P M , PPCWD Board Room
4 Opening of Bids	February 23, 2006, 1.30 PM, PPCWD Board Room

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of Five Hundred Pesos (Php500 00) to the Puerto Princesa City Water District Cashier.

The Puerto ~~Princesa City Water District~~ assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved by,

(Sgd.) ENGR. VICENTE D. ABREA
PPCWD BAC Chairman

(PDI–Jan 26 & Feb 2, 2006)

CHINESE NEW YEAR WITH CHINA BANK

Jan. 29 marks the start of the year of the Fire Dog according to the Chinese Lunar Calendar. It is said to possess the best of human traits - loyalty, honesty and confidence in people. The Fire Dog is believed to bring prosperity, good health and success to anyone in the 4704th Chinese Year. To welcome the Chinese New Year, homes and offices are adorned with charms meant to balance 'chi' and invite positive karma. China Bank, in its many years of success, has come up with its own traditions-one of which is sharing a tasty treat. On Friday, Jan. 27, all of China Bank's 141 branches nationwide will treat China Bank clients to free fortune cookies. The fortune cookie, a sweet ending to a scrumptious Chinese meal, is a fun way of divining the future through words of wisdom. 'It has been our tradition to welcome the new year with warm smiles and fun activities with our clients. It's our way of thanking them for their trust and support in the previous year, and for our continued partnership with them in the coming years,' shares branch banking group head and SVP Nancy D. Yang. China Bank is the first privately owned local commercial bank in the country. Making its clients' success its business for almost nine decades, the Bank continues to develop and offer products and services that are attuned to the times, including China Bank Online for internet and mobile banking. As 2005 closed with a milestone, may China Bank be your partner in another year of good fortune.

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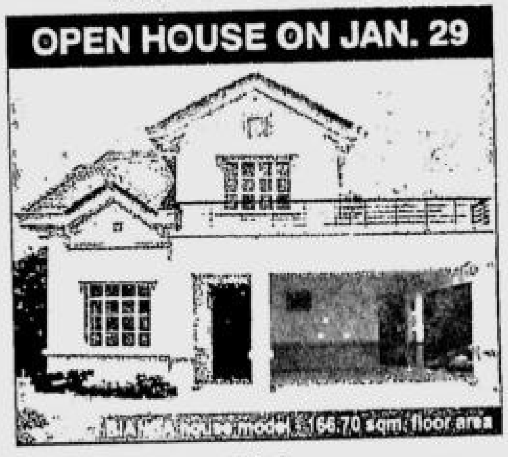

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that the Estate of the late MAGDALENA GALANG RAFANAN was extrajudicially settled among heirs as per Doc 146 Page 30 Book I Series 2005 before Notary Public Atty. Humilde S. Ferrer of Quezon City
PDI-Jan. 12,19 & 26,2006

Notice is given that the estate of the late SOLEDAD DE ASPELLERA, JOSE DELPRADO SR, JESUS DELPRADO has been settled by his heirs through final extrajudicial settlement executed by Leticia S. Mariano de Guia Notary Public of Manila under Doc.# 55, Page #12, Book III Dated Jan 19 2006 Manila IBP 638773 01 02 2006 & Doc# 54 Page# 12 Book# III dated Jan. 19 2006 Manila IBP 638773 01 02 2006 (PDI-Jan. 26, Feb. 2 & 9,2006)

Notice is given that the estate of the late Plaridel Banzon Dizon has been extra-judicially settled among his heirs before Notary Public CONCEPCION M. JUATAS of Parañaque City as per doc. No. 490, Page No. 99, Book No. 48 Series of 2006. (PDI Jan. 26, Feb. 2 & 9, 2006)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of Teresita G. Magalona has been extrajudicially settled among her heirs as per Doc. 321, Page No. 66, Book No. 46, Series of 2005 of Notary Public Ruben T.M. Ramirez of Makati City. (PDI-Jan. 25, Feb. 1, 8, 2006)

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NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Piltel Corp. stock certificate no. 131813 for 3000 shares issued to Michael Dave T. Uy was reported lost. If no contest is received, new certificate will be issued.
PDI-Jan. 19, 26, & Feb. 2, 2006

Notice is hereby given that Fil-Estate Land stock certificate no. 078803 for 10,000 shares and certificate no. 84725 for 1,700 shares issued to Michael Dave T. Uy was reported lost. If no contest is received, new certificate will be issued.
PDI- Jan 19, 26, & Feb. 2, 2006

Notice is hereby given that Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. Stock Certificate no. 98448 for 200 shares (old par value) and certificate no. 108978) for 40 shares (old par value) issued to Michael Tao Uy was reported lost. If no contest is received, new certificate will be issued.
PDI-Jan. 19, 26, & Feb. 2, 2006

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** *Deadline for submission of application is on February 17, 2006*
** *Academic Year 2006 starts on April 1, 2006*

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Say nine times a day for nine days. Prayer will be answered by the eighth day, it has never failed.

Thank you very much, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Jude, for favor granted.

OBITUARIES

Our Dearly Beloved

RODOLFO RAFAEL "DODJIE" E. MUNSAYAC

Peacefully joined our Lord
on January 22, 2006 at the age of 49.

His loving wife **LIZA**; children **DIMPLE, RAQUEL, RAFAEL, RAISSA** and **RAMONA**; mother **LOURDES**; brother **ROBERTO**, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, CEBU and has been cremated on Wednesday, January 25, 2006.

Necrological services will be held at La Salle Greenhills High School Chapel on Friday, January 27, 2006, 5:00 p.m. until Saturday, January 28, 2006, 12:00 noon.

Beloved Jack (Pops)

John Joseph Hynes

of Cappaghtagle, Ballinasloe, Co, Galway, Ireland

Died in the peace of our Lord
on 24 January 2006 at the age of 77.

He is survived by his wife **Lulu**; children & children-in-law **Maitet & Nonoy, Ging, Jun & Lisa, Chito, Julie & Ann, Lito & Lani, Paul, Edward & Sue**; grandchildren **Rachel, James, Karlo, Aris, Jack, Hannah, Mia and Aisling**; his siblings & families in Ireland – **Martin & Alice, Mary, Margaret, & Jimmy, Julia & Frank**; sisters-in-law & their families in the Philippines – **Tessie & Eddie, Mila, Baby & Jojo**; nephews and nieces, his other relatives, friends & former colleagues in Ireland & in the Philippines.

His remains will be in Malate Catholic Church until the 4th of February 2006. Final Mass will be at the Columban House in Singalong to be followed by cremation rites at 12 o'clock at the Loyola Memorial Chapels & Crematorium in Guadalupe. The family is requesting prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

> "Let the words of my mouth meet your Favor, keep the thoughts of my heart before you, Lord, my rock, my redeemer..."
>
> — Psalm 21:15

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Mitsubishi revs up for better year

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MITSUBISHI MOTORS PHILIPpines Corp. yesterday launched a new Galant model in a bid to improve its share and brand presence in the passenger car market segment this year.

MMPC senior vice president Melchor R. Dizon said the new car, dubbed Galant 240M, was the ninth-generation of the firm's full-sized sedan.

Mitsubishi first introduced the Galant in the Philippine market in 1969. The eighth-generation Galant was rolled out in 1998.

"We hope to sell 600 units of the Galant this year, which would mean a 10-percent growth in our sales of luxury cars," Dizon said.

He added that MMPC aimed to sell at least a thousand more vehicles year-on-year.

Data from the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. showed that MMPC sold about 13,000 units last year to land the No. 2 spot in the overall rankings.

Also, the company sold 1,608 passenger cars in 2005 or 11.6 percent less than in the previous year.

MMPC cornered 4.5 percent of the passenger car market last year, which means it ranked seventh among a dozen competitors.

Dizon said MMPC planned to roll out at least three new models this year, including a 2-liter Lancer in the second quarter and a Triton pick-up in the fourth quarter.

The official added that the firm was working on a "surprise model" that it hoped would help counter the adverse effect of the new value-added tax law on market growth.

Inflation slowed down to 6% in Jan, Neda says

Stronger peso helped lower prices of goods

By Michelle V. Remo

INFLATION WAS EXPECTED TO have slowed down in January to between 6 and 6.3 percent from the same period last year, as the strengthening peso helped lower prices of imported products.

This was the projection made by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), which said the deceleration of inflation would temper the effect of the two-percentage-point increase in the value-added tax (VAT) rate that will take effect in February.

Inflation measures the rate of increase in the prices of basic commodities.

An inflation of 6 percent means that a basket of goods worth P100 now costs P106.

Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning, said the government agency estimated that the peso averaged at 52.7 against a US dollar in January compared with 53.61 recorded in December.

This means that $1 worth of imports can be bought for only P52.7 compared with P53.61 in December.

"This gives consumers some room for flexibility when the VAT hike is implemented," he said.

The VAT rate would be raised from 10 to 12 percent starting Feb. 1 to comply with the recently implemented VAT Reform Law.

The law, which also expanded the coverage of VAT to include oil and power, among others, is the Arroyo administration's key reform measure to address the country's budget deficit.

Last December, year-on-year inflation already slowed down to 6.6 percent after hovering in the 7-percent mark in the previous months.

Average inflation for 2005 settled at 7.6 percent, coming in below the government's forecast of between 7.7 and 7.9 percent, but over the original target of between 5 and 6 percent.

Midway last year, authorities already admitted that the inflation target of 5 to 6 percent was no longer realistic given the unexpected increase in world oil prices.

The appreciation of the peso against the US dollar was partly attributed to the growth in the remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and optimism brought about by the improving fiscal climate.

OFW remittances were estimated to have hit a record high last year of about $10 billion.

Arroyo said that aside from strengthening of the peso, lower power rate hikes this month was expected to temper inflation.

The slowdown in power rate hikes was said to be brought about by a reduction in systems losses of power firms, he added.

The threat of an increase in pump prices by an average of 50 centavos from the December levels was one of the factors seen causing product prices to go up in January.

Neda earlier projected that average inflation for the whole of 2006 could settle at between 8 and 8.5 percent, but Arroyo said a continued appreciation of the peso would ease inflationary pressures.

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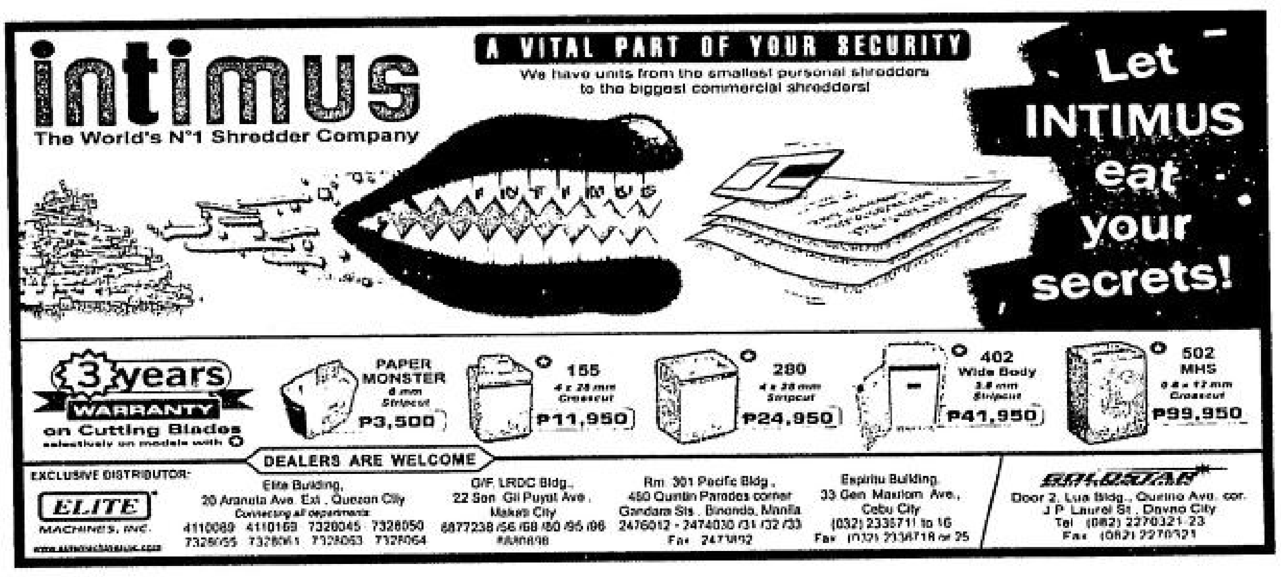

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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

CHOICE cut /C4

OVEN-BAKED Golden Pumpkin Puffs

ROASTED Beijing Duck

Serve dishes with egg. And lots of fruits, which symbolize good luck

FENG SHUI 2006

Eat your way to good luck

By Vangie Baga-Reyes

"FILL YOUR DINING table with lots of food to assure prosperity and abundance in the New Year," says Hong Kong-based geomancer Joseph Chau, feng shui consultant of Manila's Mandarin Oriental.

Yes, 2006 is the Year of the Fire Dog. And if you're the slightest bit superstitious, you will take the opportunity provided by the Chinese New Year celebration to invite good luck into your life.

Given the important role food plays in Chinese culture, it is not surprising that many dishes have symbolic meaning.

Chau suggests ways to make the Chinese New Year, which begins Jan. 29, auspicious for everyone.

"Place five kinds of fruits, except pear because it's considered an unlucky fruit," Chau says. Fruits mean a rich harvest.

Put a plate of oranges in the center of the table to symbolize good luck. Chau says the shape of the fruits is not really important. You can prepare *suha*, for long life; pineapple for lots of luck; red apples for peace and safety; mandarin oranges for more children who will bring good luck; and banana, which means more money because it looks like a hand.

The huge amount of food prepared at this time also symbolizes wealth and good fortune for the household.

Other geomancy tips

Serve dishes with eggs. The Chinese believe eggs symbolize fertility. Egg or spring rolls have the shape of a gold bar, thus, they are often served on New Year as a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

Don't forget the noodles, which stand for longevity. Fish must be served whole as a symbol of togetherness and prosperity.

Duck represents fidelity while chicken symbolizes a good marriage and the coming together of families (serving the bird whole emphasizes family unity). Lotus seeds mean fertility.

But fresh bean-curd or tofu is a no-no. It is white, which signifies death and misfortune to the Chinese.

To keep the family closer, Chau suggests putting a tray of candies on the table. "Candies represent sweetness, so they make the house a 'home sweet home.'"

Have gifts of good luck money in special red envelopes called *ampao*.

At the stroke of midnight, the rice container should be full. Slip two pieces of *ampao* inside for prosperity.

"Add one piece of spring onion for good luck, four pieces of celery with roots for a job promotion, happiness and longevity," Chau says. "Don't forget to add lettuce for material comfort and red carrots for good fortune."

On the first day of Chinese New

EAT/C3

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Mark Bautista

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PM H.K. Siopao with different fillings
9 Thu PM Pancit Canton, Fried fresh scallops, Stuffed "Tong Kong" bean curd, Chicken steamed with lily flower and black fungus
10 Fri PM Assorted soyed dishes, Cold cuts
11 Sat AM Misua guisado, wushi spare ribs, Beef belly clear soup, Steamed eggs with vermicelli
12 Sun AM Crystal shrimp balls, Stir fried shrimp balls with vegetable, Salted fish fried rice, Fish head noodles
13 Mon PM Fried crabs with salt and chili, Smoked pampano with catsup, Braise duck with 8 treasures, Dried scallops bean curd soup

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Instant food slips through generation gap

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

A REQUEST FOR A RECIPE OF *SALPICAO* was posted on the food website I was working on. A quick call to a friend, who seems to have recipes at her fingertips, was made and the answer dispatched.

A day after, I received this reply: "It was the bomb!"

It shocked me that my friend's recipe bombed. She was always a reliable source. She knew how to cook and was "kitchen-tested," so to speak.

When I told my officemates about this, they almost fell off their chairs laughing. When they stopped the howling accompanied by snorting and giggling, they explained that being called "the bomb" was actually good.

It was just one example of the generation gap in my work environment. And the gap is wider when people my age work in the computer world. My co-worker can be (and is) my classmate's son and my son's classmate. My *portamoneda* is their wallet and their gimmick is my outing. But the gap is more apparent during lunch at the pantry.

There I am with my microwavable containers standing in line to heat my food. I practice what I preach to my own sons—have lots of vegetables, only half of the rice requirement and, as often as possible, a main dish of fish.

An observer will note that the line is short at the microwave. It's longer at the water dispenser.

'Noodle' generation

My young officemates are waiting to fill their cups loaded with every dry noodle you can imagine. It's either soup or *pancit* that will appear after hot water is poured and individual flavors in packets are mixed.

While they wait to let the hot water do its trick, they discuss the latest digital games, the awful hacker who just wrecked their site, the best sports shoes (still rubber shoes to me).

Since they know I can't bring myself to eat those instant noodles, they tease me by debating on which flavor and brand are the best. They enumerate canton, *batchoy, sotanghon, mami*. The most hilarious name was *yakisoba*, which they all liked. I told them it's the right word to describe instant noodle, Japanese or not.

Perhaps the most eye-widening experience was instant rice. Put some hot water, I was told, and you had rice. They liked to call it radioactive rice. The description seems popular with my "generation gap" friends because one of them called his band Radioactive Sago and another one named her blog Radioactive Gulaman.

A country's cuisine evolves to include what people like to eat. And instant noodles are now part of the Filipino foodscape. Heaven forbid that instant rice should figure in it.

An example of that evolution is the curry rice of Japan. Puzzled at just how curry figured in Japanese cuisine, I asked our host at a food conference in Japan when curry became part of their menu. "Quite recently, during the Meiji period," was his response. Looking it up, I realized that, to a Japanese, the 19th century was "quite recent."

Japanese curry

The question was asked because it's such a puzzle how curry worked with a cuisine that was orderly presented. When served, curry rice looks like muck and its flavor doesn't seem to match up with soy, *wasabi* and *dashi*.

The answer was revealed in a book, though I didn't know it at the time I bought it. The "Wilder Shores of Gastronomy" (Ten Speed Press, 2002) was purchased because it looked promising since some of the names behind it were eminent food writers—Alan Davidson and Elizabeth David.

A GENERATION X rendition of Christmas food in crepe paper: *puto bumbong, bibingka,* tamales and *queso de bola*

In its collection of essays was a chapter on curry rice, "Gaijin Gold: How the British Version of an Indian Dish Turned Japanese" by Keiko Ohnuma. She wrote about how the *kare raisu* or curry rice of her childhood came to be. Yes, she confirmed that curry stew "was brought to Japan on board British ships during the rapid opening to the West during the Meiji era."

She surmised that it flourished because anything Western was fascinating at the time. Together with the *kare*, people learned to love—and still do—deep-fried pork cutlets (*tonkatsu*), potato croquettes (*korokke*) and hashed beef (*hayashi*) rice.

Kare raisu spread throughout Japan mainly because it's cheap convenience food, a boon for the salaried men (office workers). It spoke to the new generation who wanted a more informal meal than the *kaiseki ryori*, the Japanese ceremonial meal with its "rigid formality." And it took advantage of innovations in food processing.

Convenient

When the curry packet was developed, no one really needed to know how to cook curry. They merely had to open "hermetically sealed retort pouches" that didn't need refrigeration and would not have the aftertaste of canned goods.

Since the Meiji era, there have been other popular convenience foods—*omuretsu* (omelettes), *aisukurimu* (ice cream) and *sandoichi* (sandwich).

During my stint with the dot.com company, it was easy to tell what was popular with generation X. Delivery guys were kept busy bringing hamburger, pizza, barbecue and "toppings," which were really viands placed on top of rice.

What was encouraging, from my point of view as a Filipino food advocate, was how the favorite topping was *adobo* and that they ate as much *pancit palabok* as spaghetti.

But what really made my heart flutter was one Christmas season when every desk in that office had to compete in a décor contest. I was asked to judge and the winner was a creative girl who made *bibingka* and *puto bumbong, tamales* and *queso de bola* out of crepe paper.

Then and there I knew that this generation, though it loved instant noodles and was willing to try radioactive rice, would not forget traditional Filipino cooking.

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BAKING CLASSES

February 03, Friday BAKING MADE EASY. This class is for all beginners in baking. The recipes are simple, popular and good for business. Chocolate Chip Cookies, Rum Bundt Cake, Banana Loaf, Lemon Bars and Strawberry Shortcake will be demonstrated to you by Chef Junjun De Guzman for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

February 06, Monday TWIST TO BASIC BAKING. Simple and easy to learn recipes will be demonstrated by Pastry Chef Hannah Herrera. The recipes are Cream-Cheese Cookies, Hi-Fibre Cookies, Choco-Coffee Cookies, Banana Cream Pie and Apple Pie. Recipes include all ingredients for P1,300.00 from 10:00 3:00 p.m. NEW CLASS.

February 07, Tuesday BREADS. Bread recipes from our Pastry and Cake Decorator Chef, Chef Ana Baluyot, recipes include Ensaimada, Pan de Sal, Cinnamon Roll, Mamon, Cheesy Cupcake and Dinner Roll from 10:00 3:00 p.m. including all ingredients for P1,300.00.

February 10, Friday CHEESECAKES: WITH A DIFFERENCE. Chef & Food Columnist Adoree Chong-Uy will present new ways to prepare cheesecakes. Recipes include Ube Mousse Cheesecake, Langka Cheesecake, Mango Cheesecake, Dalandan Curd Cheesecake, Pandan Cheesecake and Green Tea Cheesecake for P1,500.00 including all ingredients from 10:00 4:00 p.m.

February 17, Friday FAVORITE COOKIES AND BARS 1. Chef Junjun de Guzman presents scrumptious baked goodies he grew up with like Nutty Butterscotch Bars, Oatmeal Mango Cookies, Honey Orange Bars, Rocky Road Bar, Amaretti Cookies and Neiman's Mistake for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

February 20, Monday BAKING MADE EASY 2. A sequel to Chef Junjun's class for baking beginners, simple and popular baking recipes that's good for business. The recipes are Queso de Bola Muffin, Oatmeal Cookies, Chocolate Brownies, Food for the Gods and Orange Butter Cake. From 1:00 4:00 p.m. for P1,300.00 including all ingredients.

February 22, Wednesday BAKING MADE EASY 3. The series continues with an assortment of goodies from Chef Junjun de Guzman who will be demonstrating Snickerdoodles, Caramelitas, Macadamia Coffee Cake, Basque Cake and Chocolate Streusel Squares for P1,300.00 from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

February 23, Thursday BAKESHOP CAKES. Delicious bakeshop cakes will be demonstrated by Pastry and Cake Decorator Chef Ana Baluyot. The recipes are Mango Cake, Strawberry Cake, Mocca Roll, Blueberry Cake with Streusel and Chocolate for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 10:00 4:00 p.m.

February 24, Friday COOKIES GALORE. A collection of new recipes for all cookie lovers from Chef Junjun de Guzman; let's all do: Cashew Fudge Cookies, Crunch Cookies, Oatmeal Choco Chip Cookies, Graham Pecan Cookie and Cardamom Almond Cookies for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

COOKING CLASSES

January 26, Thursday SPECIAL EVERYDAY MEALS 1. This easy meal that Chef Gino teaches is meant to put a smile on every person seated on the table. Recipes include Fried Mozzarella with Marinara Sauce, Gambas, Chicken Parmiggiano, Grape Salad, Fillet of Steak with 3 Mushroom Gravy and Butterscotch Cream Pie. For P1,300.00 including ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

January 30, Monday COOKING FOR TWO, Part 1. Whether it's pure romance or beating the crowded Valentines restaurants, Chef Gino gives tasty meaning to cooking Cooking for 2. Recipes include a no-fail shopping list. Learn to prepare Duet of Pumpkin and Spinach Soup, Prosciutto and Olive Pasta, Salmon Fillet with Dill Crème Reduction, Rib-eye Steak with Onion Demiglace and Garlic Mashed Potatoes and Mango Fritters with Chocolate Ginger Sauce for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

January 31, Tuesday SPECIAL EVERYDAY MEALS 2. Chef Gino will teach us another set of easy to do meals like Stuffed Mushrooms, Salpicado, Chicken ala King in Phyllo Cups, Penne with Four Cheese Sauce, Salmon Meuniere with Lemon Dill Veloute, Bananas with Rhum and Raisins. You will also learn how to make homemade tomato sauce from scratch. Recipes include all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m. for P1,300.00.

February 01, Wednesday PULUTAN CLASSICS. Traditional and classic Pulutan fare will be demonstrated by Chef Toto Erfe. The recipes are Sisig, Peppered Tuna Ceviche, Curly Calamari, Chicken Feet with Tausi, Crispy Binagoongang and for P1,300.00 from 11:00 3:00 pm including all ingredients

February 02, Thursday CHINESE DIMSUMS. Our Chinese Pastry and Cake-Decorator Chef, Ana Baluyut will share with us her family-own recipes of assorted dumplings like Siomai and other famouse Chinese dimsums. The recipes are Eight Treasure Spring Rolls, Sweet Peanut Soup, Sesame Chicken Roll-ups, Pork Siomai, Shrimp Dumpling, Quail Eggs Siomai and Beef Siomai include all ingredients for P1,300.00 from 10:00 4:00 p.m.

February 05, Sunday BENTO: BASIC JAPANESE DISHES. Chef Hiromi Ogino will teach us the basic Japanese dishes of a Bento from Sushi, Sashimi, Sukiyaki and Tempura for P1,300.00 from 10:00 3:00 p.m. NEW CLASS.

February 08, Wednesday A TASTE OF VIETNAM 2. A sequel to Chef Nga Nguyen de Lemos Vietnam cuisine for you to enjoy, the recipes are Cha Gio Tom (Fried Springroll with Shrimps), Goi Buoi Hai Sang (Pomelo Salad with Jellyfish), Ca Kho To (Caramelized Fish in Hot Pot), Banh Xeo (Vietnamese Omelette), Phaxao Bo (Sautéed Hofan with Beef and Kailan Leaves) and Che Dau Xanh (Yellow Beans with Coconut Milk) for P1,300.00 from 1:00 4:00 p.m. including all ingredients.

February 09, Thursday COOKING FOR TWO, Part 2. Here's another set of valentine recipes from Chef Gino that can be cooked not only for this Valentine but also when celebrating special occasions. The recipes are Mixed Greens with Tarragon Vinaigrette, Quick Onion Soup, Seabass Meuniere with Chanterelle Cream, Mediterranean Style Lamb Chops and Apple Crumble with Butterscotch Sauce topped with Vanilla Ice Cream for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

February 12, Sunday THE SAUSAGE WORKSHOP 1. Recipes from Chef Gene for you to learn that can be use in business or as gifts. The recipes are Italian Sausage, Morcillas or Blood Sausage, Longganisang Calumpit, Breakfast Pork Sausage, Seafood Sausage, Sulipan Sausage and Chorizo de Jabali. Recipes include all ingredients for P1,300.00 from 11:00 3:00 p.m.

February 13, Monday THE SAUSAGE WORKSHOP 2. Chef Gene teaches his favorite exotic sausages like Fresh Pork Sausage with Apple and Dried Onion, Italian Sausage with 3 Cheeses and Red Wine, Duck Sausage with Fresh Sage and Roasted Garlic, Greek Sausage Loukanika, Tuscan Sausage, Nurnberg Sausage and Sweet Italian Sausage. The workshop includes recipes plus ingredients for P1,300.00 from 11:00 3:00 p.m.

February 15, Wednesday MEDITERRANEAN DISHES FOR THE HOME. Simple yet sumptuous dishes like Beef and Cheese Tartlets (Bocaditos de Queso), Melon and Parma Salad with Strawberry Salsa (Ensalada Melon y Parma con Fresas), Chicken Roulade (Pollo Envuelto), Eggplants with Mushrooms (Berengjenas Rellenas), Fish Stew with Garlic Sauce (Suquet de Pescado) and Baked Tomatoes with Ham (Tomates Asados) will be demonstrated by Chef Betina Legarda of Gourmet Palate. Recipes include all ingredients from 10:00 2:00 p.m. for P1,500.00. NEW CLASS.

February 21, Tuesday FAST AND EASY COOKING 1. Chef Gino Gonzalez teaches you 8 quick, easy and delicious dishes that busy bodies can be proud of. Strictly for family and café friendly cooking! Recipes include Warm Pollunchay Salad; Clam Chowder; Baked Leek Tart; Shrimp Croquettes; Pasta Alfredo Sauce; Pinoy Sausage and Olive Pasta; Cumin Crusted Chicken Breast with Balsamic Reduction and Butter Tea Parfait with Lemon Custard Sauce for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 1:00 4:00 p.m.

February 27, Monday SIMPLE & HEALTHY MEALS. After the holidays people want to eat light but still healthy food so here are recipes from Chef Hannah Herrera, our Pastry Instructor and formerly DOME Kitchen Manager. The recipes are Healthy Fritata, Lite Italian Sandwich, Chicken Sandwich Gourmet Style, 3 Kinds of Easy Pasta Sauces (Simple Carbonara, Meat Sauce and Healthy Basil Pesto) with a bonus of Assorted Spreads for P1,300.00 including all ingredients from 10:00 4:00 p.m. NEW CLASS.

February 28, Tuesday SAVORY CHEESECAKE. Cheesecakes are not only for Desserts. They can be delicious starters, a light meal or a main course such as Chef Gino original recipes of Waldorf Cheesecake; Muffuletta Cheesecake; Cheesecake Parmigiana, Smoked Ham, Artichoke and Feta Cheesecake; Pesto Cheesecake; No Bake Norwegian Salmon, Dill and Capers Cheesecake plus bonus recipes of Tomato Confit and Dalanghita Vinaigrette for P1,500.00 from 11:00 4:00 p.m.

WE WOULD APPRECIATE IF YOU COULD CALL AT LEAST TWO DAYS BEFORE THE CLASS FOR RESERVATION.

DIPLOMA IN PROFESSIONAL CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM

The Professional Culinary Arts Program prepares students for professional entry into the food service industry. This intensive program integrates classical and modern culinary techniques from the finest institutions abroad with kitchen management skills. Students learn how to prepare soups, sauces, vegetables, entrees, breads, pastries and desserts. They will learn how to identify, fabricate and portion meat, poultry, fish and shellfish. The course will also provide the introductory skills on Asian and Halal cooking wine appreciation, gastronomy, table service and back of the house operations.

TESDA ACCREDITED PROGRAM. This program is a hands-on training series for students to gain proficiency in various skills needed to perform at professional standards in a commercial kitchen. The students will also prepare buffets and be involved in actual functions.

Learn the CACS method and be the Global Chef! Our program is the only school with its own restaurant outlet and its own internship program of 400 hours and Externship or an outside practicum program of 300 hours. It is also the only program with the mostly widely used software hospitality system worldwide that gives its graduates the global edge. Enrollment includes 3 sets of uniforms, chef's kit, manual and all the ingredients to be used. NO HIDDEN COSTS!

Classes will start on February 28. Enrollment is ongoing. For inquiries and reservations, call 726-9326 or 725-5089 and look for Marilyn, Glady or Grace

Chinoy merienda and ostrich dishes

THE REGGIE ASPIRAS SCHOOL OF Culinary Arts is offering the following classes:

JAN. 27—My Chinoy Merienda (all new): Siomai with Lobsters and Foie Gras, Duck Asado Siopao with Cherries and Foie Gras, Asado in Lettuce Leaves and Plum Sauce, Chicken Pops with Orange Sauce Chinese Style, Fish Noodle Chinese Style, Almond Lychee Maja Blanca

Jan. 28—Traditional and Classic Roasts: Garlic-crusted Roast Beef Served with Three Sauces—Garlic Gravy, Caesar, Sun-dried Tomato and Yorkshire Pudding; Roast Pork with Delicious Corn Bread with Cream Gravy, Apple Calvados, Mango Chutney; Rack of Lamb with Honey Glaze, Mint Chutney and Raisin Peppercorn Sauce

Jan. 30—Chicken Barbecue (all new): Stuffed Chicken Barbecue, Brown Sugar Chicken Barbecue, Rum Chicken Barbecue, Barbecued Chicken with Carbonara Sauce; side dishes.

Feb. 1—Ostrich, the Healthy Alternative (all new): Learn to roast, smoke and cook ostrich. Ostrich Roast with Gravy and Sauces, Ostrich a la Pobre, Smoked Breasts of Ostrich with Sauces, Grilled Ostrich Steaks; salads, side dishes and dessert

Call 9289296, 9273008 or 6335162.

Everyday meals

The Center for Asian Culinary Studies will conduct the following classes:

Jan. 26—Special Everyday Meals 1, 1-4 p.m. Easy meals from Chef Gino like Fried Mozzarella with Marinara Sauce, Gambas, Chicken Parmiggiano, Grape Salad, Fillet of Steak with Three Mushroom Gravy and Butterscotch Cream Pie. Fee is P1,300, including ingredients.

Jan. 30—Cooking for Two, Part 1, 1-4 p.m. Learn to prepare Duet of Pumpkin and Spinach Soup, Prosciutto and Olive Pasta, Salmon Fillet with Dill Crème Reduction, Rib-eye Steak with Onion Demiglace and Garlic Mashed Potatoes and Mango Fritters with Chocolate Ginger Sauce. Fee is P1,300, including all ingredients.

Jan. 31—Special Everyday Meals 2, 1-4 p.m. Learn such dishes as Stuffed Mushrooms, Salpicado, Chicken a la King in Phyllo Cups, Penne with Four-cheese Sauce, Salmon Meuniere with Lemon Dill Veloute, Bananas with Rhum and Raisins. You will also learn how to make homemade tomato sauce from scratch. Fee is P1,300, including all ingredients.

The Center for Asian Culinary Studies is at 455 P. Guevarra St. cor. CM Recto, San Juan, Metro Manila (7269326/7255089).

Baking and cooking

Dorothy's Cooking School will hold hands-on bread making classes Feb. 1, 3 and 11 at New Manila, Quezon City. Breads include sausage roll with spring onion topping, *pan de sal*, potato bread, *siopao*, *ensaymada*. Desserts like baklava, caramel coffee cake and baked orange cheesecake will be taught Jan. 30 while Korean recipes such as *calbichim* and *chapcahe* will be covered on Feb. 4. A three-day cake decorating workshop covering fondant whimsical cakes, figure-piping and hand-molding will be held Feb. 6-8.

Dorothy's Traveling Cooking School is scheduled to hold classes Feb. 16-18 in Davao. For inquiries about Manila classes, call 7217735. For Davao, call (082) 2223494 loc. 217.

Japanese food

Maya Kitchen offers Traditional Japanese Cooking class, 3-6 p.m., Jan. 28. Dishes include popular items like Miso soup, Mixed Tempura, Kamameshi, Assorted Sushi and Sashimi and Sukiyaki. Participants get a free Japanese cookbook.

A class on catering, Jan. 27-28, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., will feature legal and technical aspects of starting a catering business, facilities, personnel, menu including portioning and quantification. Actual cooking will include Stuffed Chicken Thigh, Vegetable Samosa, Spicy Chicken Wings, Eggplant Skordalia, Quiche Lorraine. Participants get a free catering cookbook.

In Fundamentals of Bakery, Jan. 31-Feb. 3, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., learn standard baking techniques on the preparation of bread, quick breads, pies, cookies, cakes and endless baking application using ready mixes.

Visit Maya Kitchen (Tuesday-Saturday) at 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Rd.), Makati City. Call 8921185/8925011 loc. 108. E-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph.

Food expo opens today

THE FIFTH PHILIPPINE FOOD Expo will be held Jan. 26-29 at SM Megatrade Halls of SM Megamall Bldg. B, Mandaluyong City.

Theme of the event is "Showcasing Our Best Food Forward." It is organized by the Philippine Food Processors and Exporters' Organization, Inc. (Philfoodex), in cooperation with Cut Unlimited.

Seminars will be conducted on the latest trends in the food business.

They include New Business Trends, Environmental Compliance, Events Marketing: How to Choose Shows/Events for Your Products, Business on the Web: eCommerce Challenge for Exporters, Updates on Food Safety, and the Mindanao Investment Forum.

Other special events include Creative Mango Product Contest and an On-the-Spot Pinoy Kid Art contest.

The Food Expo is supported by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Agriculture, the Buy Pinoy Movement of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc., SM Megamall, the Center for International Expositions and Missions, the National Food Authority, the Philippine Exporters Confederation, Market Encounter Goes to Manila Foundation, the Land Bank of the Philippines, and the Philippine Retailers Association.

Two-in-one offer

CHILI'S OFFERS TWO grilled dishes in one plate for P420. The Mix and Match Grill is available for a limited time only.

Choose any two dishes from Chili's all-time favorite grilled dishes: Baby Back Ribs, Shrimp and Salmon Skewer, Beef Salpicao and Monterey Chicken from the Mix and Match Grill. The choices come with Pueblo Rice and fresh veggies.

A free bottomless glass of Coke comes with the order Feb. 1-28.

Visit any Chili's restaurants at Missouri cor. Nevada Streets in Northeast Greenhills; Greenbelt 1 in Ayala Center, Makati, and Tomas Morato cor. Sct. Fernandez Streets in Quezon City.

New product may become coffee drinker's first pick

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

NESTLÉ PHILIPPINES INC. PAID tribute to Philippine coffee and the Filipino farmer when it held a special launch of Nescafé Classic First Pick last week at the inner courtyard of historic San Agustin church in Intramuros.

The new product is made of 100-percent Philippine-grown coffee, specially picked at the beginning of the harvest season.

That's good news for local coffee growers. The Philippines used to be among the world's leading coffee bean exporters until competition became too stiff. As production dropped, sources said even local manufacturers had to import coffee beans.

Now there's evidently a growing demand for the Filipino coffee growers' produce. A tour of coffee farms in the highlands of Cavite and Batangas shows coffee growers are doing good business these days.

Nestlé company alone gets coffee beans from about 100,000 farmers. This benefits indirectly some 300,000 people who are in some ways involved in the planting, harvesting, processing and trading of coffee. Nestlé has a farm in Davao that supplies 80 percent of robusta, a coffee variety, planting materials in the country.

We tasted the new Nescafé Classic First Pick during its recent launch, and we do agree with our hosts and product endorsers that the product, indeed, has a distinct rich taste and aroma.

Guests during the launch were officials of the National Coffee Development Board that has given the product its seal of approval, the "Café Isla" stamp on labels.

The new instant coffee comes in two sizes, the 50-g box and 200-g jar.

> The Philippines was a leading coffee bean exporter until competition became too stiff. As production dropped, local makers had to import coffee beans

Broadband Internet

Comment from E. Fernandez: "While it is true that high-speed broadband Internet connection spares subscribers from snail mail agony, it has not been able to filter out spam or unwanted e-mail. [In fact,] the spam can now come into our inbox several times faster than in dial-up connection."

On the subject of spam, PLDTmyDSL gives the following tips for keeping your E-mail inbox spam-free:

- Never post your real e-mail address in forums, websites and bulletin boards. It's like serving your e-mail to spammers on a silver platter.
- When you register with an Internet site, make sure you do not give them the right to sell your e-mail address to their partners that may be spammers in masquerade. Watch out for tick boxes and read the text carefully before you click "I Agree" to their conditions.
- Never click any link that invites you to unsubscribe. This is a scam telling spammers that the e-mail address they sent a message to is still active—a cue to send more spam.
- If the e-mail header or sender looks suspicious, don't bother opening it. These e-mail messages might contain tiny graphics that, when viewed, launches a program that registers with the spammers, confirming yet another live e-mail address.
- Quit sending and replying to chain e-mail messages. They may be disguised programs used by spammers to collect e-mail addresses.
- Be wary of spoof e-mail asking for your password, credit card number or other personal data.
- Filter your e-mail. One of the most powerful ways to address your spam problem is by setting the filter in your e-mail to reject messages containing obvious catchphrases utilized by spammers. Free e-mail service providers like Yahoo and Hotmail come with filters and intelligent spam control systems. Outlook Express and similar e-mail software are also equipped with filters that allow you to block incoming or delete spam.
- Fight spam with software. If your e-mail is already infested with spam, try using a program developed specifically to seek, delete and block spam. Programs like McAfee SpamKiller, Norton Anti-Spam, Qurb and SpamCatcher will do the trick.

E-mail the author at mvgiron07@yahoo.com

Eat your way to . . .

From page C1

Year, eat vegetables. On the seventh day, eat a bowl of congee with red dates and peanuts for abundance.

"Serve and eat as many lucky foods as possible on the New Year," Chau says.

But, if you're not adventurous enough to cook Chinese food, most Chinese restaurants or hotels, like Mandarin Oriental, offers special New Year menus.

FENG shui expert Joseph Chau with a wealth bowl for the Year of the Fire Dog JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Prosperity meal

Mandarin Oriental has prepared a selection of "prosperity dishes" for those who will take part in the Chinese New Year celebration.

A midnight dinner buffet at the ballroom and at Tin Hau will feature dishes symbolic of good health, family unity, wealth and fortune. Dishes include deep-fried taro dumplings with chicken and mushrooms; marinated Pacific clams with sweet-and-sour sauce; braised shark's fin with fish maw and crab meat soup; fried rice with Chinese black mushrooms and chicken and Chinese sausages wrapped in lotus leaves; steamed live *garoupa* with minced pork in Szechuan chili sauce; braised dried oyster with black moss in brown sauce; and ice-chilled red ruby with coconut cream.

A Chinese New Year special à la carte/Chef's recommendation menu, available at Tin Hau until Jan. 27, includes crab meat broth with fish maw and *conpoy*; deep-fried king prawns with salted egg yolk served with mango chili sauce; wok-fried king prawns with dried chili in a taro ring; and braised pork trotters with mushrooms and black moss in oyster sauce.

The hotel has also lined up several activities to welcome the New Year, starting at 11 p.m. on Jan. 28. A prosperity parade will start from the hotel and will cover Makati Avenue, Cruzada Street and Paseo de Roxas. Leading the motorcade are Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay and Mandarin Oriental's general manager Helmut Gaisberger.

Completing the lunar extravaganza are a Paai-Shan ceremony by Chau, lion and dragon eye-dotting ceremonies by the guests of honor, dragon and lion dances, fireworks, and firecrackers.

On Jan. 28-Feb. 11, Beijing cuisine takes center stage at Tin Hau, with guest chefs Qi Peng Tao Andy and Ma Meng Nick of Hilton Beijing Hotel, who will be flown in by Philippine Airlines.

For those wanting to fully enjoy the celebration, Mandarin Oriental offers special room packages. Call 7508888.

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

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1ST ASIAN "ICES" HALL OF FAME AWARDEE

1. FEB. 6 - 10 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - BASIC CAKE DECORATING - (P10,500 for whole course)
P4,000 - FEB. 6 - 7 - Learn 10 diff. kinds of icing flowers, figure piping. Bake & decorate your basket weave cake using boiled icing.
P2,750 - FEB. 8 - Bake & decorate your own character birthday cake using star tips, simple borders & icing flowers.
P4,500 - FEB. 9 - 10 - Wedding cake assembly: Bake & decorate your own 2 tiered wedding cake using fancy borders, scrolls, strings & icing flowers. NEXT SCHED: MAR. 6 - 10
2. FEB. 11, 18 & 25 // 8:00AM - 12:00NN - SUGAR FREE BAKING FOR DIABETIC
P3,000 - FEB. 11 - Flaky (kaliskis) Empanada, Coffee Cheese Cake, Chocolate Nut Pie, Pineapple Flower Cake, Lemonpie. NEXT SCHED: MAR. 11
P3,000 - FEB. 18 - Banana, Apple Almond, Bars, Carrot Cake, Choco Nut Cake, Whole Wheat Bread, Raisin Bread NEXT SCHED: MAR. 18
P3,000 - FEB. 25 - Brownie Supreme, Choco Chiffon, Orange Chiffon, Banana Pecan, Cookies, Spiced Raisin Cookies, Chewy Golden Cookies, Baking for Diabetics. NEXT SCHED: MAR. 25
3. FEB. 13 - 17 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - ADVANCED GUMPASTE & FOREIGN METHOD - (P10,500)
New method on Gumpaste Flowers, Objects, Marzipan, Ribbon Insertion, Finest String Works, Lace Pieces, New Recipe of Fondant Chocolate Fondant NEXT SCHED: MAR. 13 - 17
4. FEB. 15 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - NEW METHOD ON FONDANT - (P4,500)
Using Lace Mats, New Rolling Pin W/ Designs, Swags & Ribbons, Non-Stick boards w/ Flowers & Veiners & Quilting NEXT SCHED: MAR. 15
5. FEB. 20 - 24 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - BASIC COMMERCIAL BAKING - (P12,500. For whole course)
P2,500 - FEB. 20 - Cakes: plain, mocha, choco, orange chiffon cakes, pound cake, sponge cake, moist choco cake.
P2,500 - FEB. 21 - Cakes & Roll: malacañang roll, chocolate roll, brownies, pineapple upside-down, custard cake, mamon.
P2,750 - FEB. 22 - Breads: pan de sal, dinner rolls, buns, pan de coco, ensaymada, honey bread & white bread.
P2,750 - FEB. 23 - Pies: Buko pie, custard pie, pineapple pie, apple pie, mango pie, caramel tart.
P2,500 - FEB. 24 - Pastries & Cookies: almond tart, San Nicolas cookies, camachile, oatmeal cookies, lengua de gato, coconut macaroons. NEXT SCHED: MAR. 20 - 24
6. FEB. 20 - 24 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - COLD PORCELAIN FLOWER COURSES WITH PORCELAIN RECIPE. (P4,500)
(Each set is lesson covered for one day) - a) Sampaguita, Sunflower, Waling-waling, b) Rose, Catlleya, Cymbidium, c) Magnolia, Gerbera, Lilies; d) Open Rose, Hydrangeas, Grapes *COLD PORCELAIN DOLLS (P10,000) by appointment* NEXT SCHED: MAR. 20 - 24
7. FEB. 27 - MAR. 3 // 8:00AM - 5:30PM - SPECIAL BAKING - (P13,500. For whole course)
Learn to make 25 Kinds of special cakes from around the world. Each cake has a different icing & decoration.
P3,000 - FEB. 27 - All Sponge Cakes: Nelusko cake, Black Forest cake, Decadence cake, Fan Torte cake, Fruit Torte cake.
P3,000 - FEB. 28 - All Chiffon Cakes: Mango cake, Ube cake, Pistachio cake, Rocky Road cake, Coffee Crunch cake.
P3,000 - MAR. 1 - All Butter Cakes: Butter Rum cake, Carrot cake, Kahlua cake, Moist Chocolate cake, Special Fruit cake.
P3,000 - MAR. 2 - Cheesecakes: Blueberry, Mango, Tiramisu, Cookies & Cream, New York Cheesecake.
P3,000 - MAR. 3 - Merengues: Sansrival, Solothurn, Queens Torte, Braso de Mercedez, Pineapple Merengue Pie.
NEXT SCHED: MAR. 27 - 31 / FOR SPECIAL SCHEDULE PLS. CALL
8. // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - NEW COURSE & LATEST GELATIN FLOWERS W/O SUGAR - P3,000. BY APPOINTMENT

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A winner of a tenderloin

ON MY WAY TO WORK, I passed by Monterey White Plains to pick up my Crown Roast. While waiting, I hovered around the freezer as I usually do and, to my surprise, saw the most heavily marbled tenderloin I had ever seen!

I looked at the meat in awe, scrutinizing it—Meltique beef, the label read. I thought, if it actually tasted as good as it looked, then we had a winner!

Last night, my gourmand brother, Manong Boy, was in a quandary. Hungry but not knowing what to eat, I suggested he tried Meltique tenderloin, to which he raised no objection. We thawed it, thawed—don't you just love how culinary terms make the whole process sound so *sosyal*?

In truth, he was famished, so we did the most primitive of methods—put the frozen meat pieces on a *platito* and turned on the electric fan. No time for ref thawing, he said, every minute or so checking if the meat was ready for the grill. When it was, with just salt and pepper, my brother grilled away.

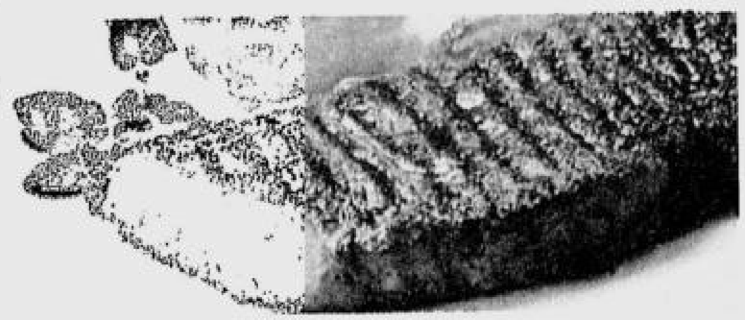
KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

I joined him for dinner and, to our extreme delight, it was one of the juiciest of tenderloins we'd ever laid our forks and knives on! *Panalo*, as my brother put it! And I agree!

The Meltique secret is a highly developed method of inserting soluble oil into lean meat cuts to baste the meat internally through the cooking process, the perfected art of the traditional French "larding" process. This ensures that all natural juices are retained, resulting in full-flavored, tender, moist and succulent Aussie beef.

For all steak connoisseurs, a must-look-into! Aside from the beef being excellent, the store makes life easy by delivering it to your doorstep. Monterey White Plains, tel. 9136933.



MELTIQUE tenderloin tastes as good as it looks.

Tenderizing pork

I just want to ask how I can make pork tender. I just had one of the toughest pork chops. And to think my cook just had it fried. The pork chop left over from Tasty Dumplings yesterday was even more tender.

GILBERT

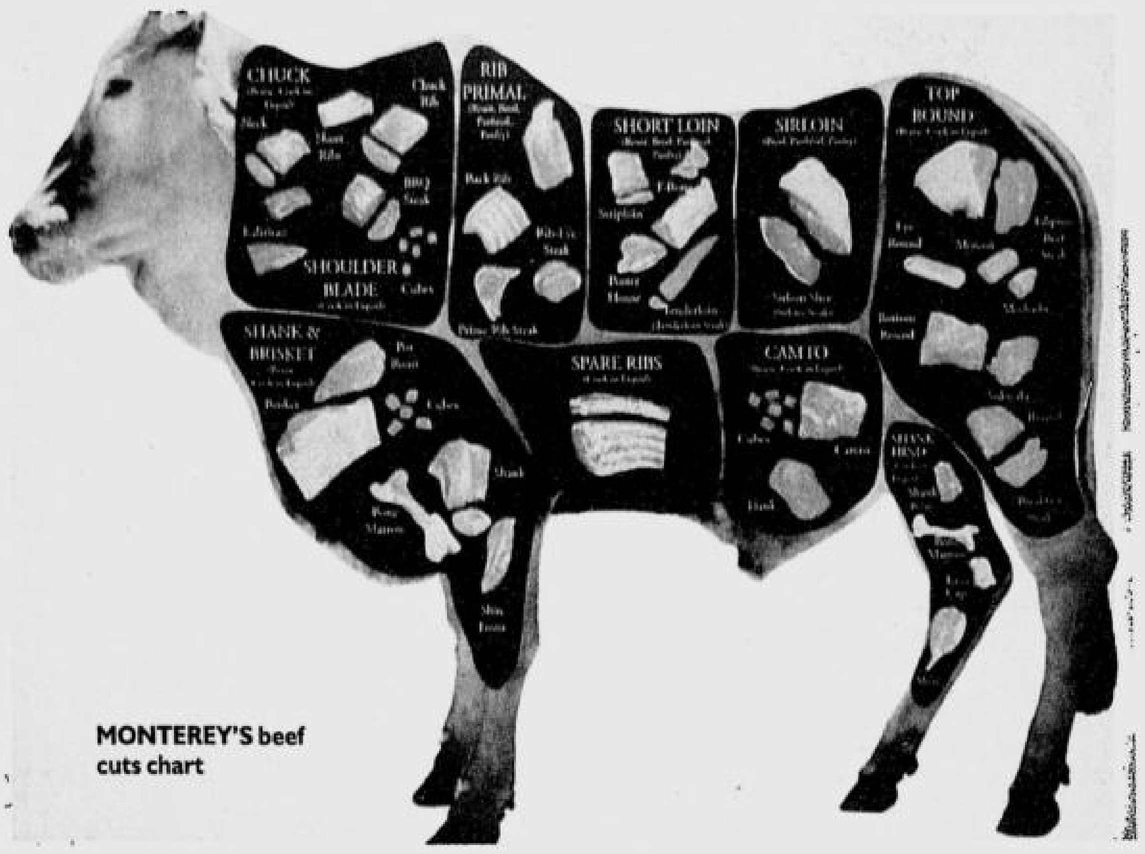
That's the problem with pork chop. It tends to be tough because it generally is a lean cut except for the strip of fat that lines it.

In our house, we fry our pork chops until they're nice and golden brown, opting for a light crispness. Which means, of course, they must be consumed immediately or they become tough, too.

What we do is pound our chops thin, about a fourth of an inch thick, with a meat mallet. We then season with salt and pepper, marinate in loads of garlic and fry in hot oil. Remember not to overcook. If you do, the meat gets tough.

Another way to keep pork chop moist and soft is to bread it. If you wish—though you don't have to—pound chops to make them slightly thin, then season with salt and pepper. If you want, you can marinate them first in some herbs, add garlic or even sprinkle with a bit of onion or garlic powder. Just before serving, dredge the chops with flour, shaking off the excess.

Beat an egg, adding a teaspoon of water, and dip the floured chop. Then dredge your chop in breadcrumbs, either regular or *panko* (Japanese), making sure that the chop is evenly coated with breadcrumbs. Deep fry. For thicker breading, dip it one more time in the beaten egg mixture then again in the breadcrumbs.



MONTEREY'S beef cuts chart

However, if you want a foolproof method, try this and you will have tender, juicy chops all the time. This technique is perfect for grilled or even fried pork chops.

Brined Chops

3 c milk
5 c water
Bring to a boil.
Turn off heat immediately.
Add:
½ c rock salt
¾ c sugar
Mix until dissolved. Cool mixture. Leave in refrigerator until cold.
Add:
2 tsp rosemary
2 tsp thyme
1 tsp sage
2 tbsp mustard powder
½ c garlic, pounded to a paste
2 bay leaves
1 tsp cayenne pepper
1 tbsp black peppercorns, whole
Mix well and add:
2 kg pork chops, cut at least ¾- or 1-inch thick

Leave chops to marinate at least 12-24 hours in the ref.

If not cooking chops immediately, take out of brining solution, rinse and dry.

Store in freezer and thaw before cooking.

Pan-fry or grill.

(I serve mine with apple sauce and mustard.)

I always look forward to Thursdays because of your column in the INQUIRER. Do you have a diagram for beef to show which cut it is from? Please help and more power!

GEMMA

Sure do! Thanks, Darlene Villas of Monterey, for sharing the chart with Kitchen Rescue.

For comments or suggestions e-mail raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

Feasts for Chinese New Year

DINING OUT

PEKING GARDEN offers special set menu in celebration of the Chinese New Year. The menu includes four kinds of appetizers. Shark's Fin Soup with Seafood and Bamboo Pith, Peking Duck, Golden Prawns with Salted Egg and Sesame Prawn Balls, Braised Dried Oysters with Sea Moss and Lettuce, Steamed Lapu-lapu in Hot Chili Sauce, Deep-fried Peppercorn Crabs, Fried Rice with Maxim's Chinese Sausage, Steamed Supreme Soup and Pork Dumplings and Sweetened Glutinous Balls in rice wine flavor for dessert, all at P12,800+ for 10 persons. Peking Garden, which serves northern Chinese cuisine, is at 2/L Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati (8179066/9067).

JADE GARDEN offers special set menu consisting of Shark's Fin Soup with Crabmeat and Crab Egg, Peking Duck, Dried Oyster Rolls with Sea Moss, Steamed Lapu-lapu, Steamed Crabs in Buko Juice, Baked Shrimps with E-fu Noodles, Maxim's Chinese Sausage Rolls and Hot Sweetened Almond Puree with Dumplings for dessert, good for 10 persons at P12,800+. Jade Garden is at Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati (8922336, 8124548). Peking Garden and Jade Garden also offer special *tikoy* at P268/box, with one free box for every purchase of 10 boxes.

THE HERITAGE Hotel's Restaurant Riviera offers Lo Hei Fortune Buffet Jan. 28-Feb. 12. Buffet specialties include Yu Sheng Salad, Tsong Tsai Fan (special Mini Pot Rice with Chinese Sausage), Tsong Tsai Tong (Mini Pot Soup), Hoe Sifatt Choy (Braised Dried Oyster with Black Moss and Vegetable), Muar Chee (Glutinous Rice Ball Glazed with Grated Peanuts), among others. Call 8548888.

RUSTAN'S EAST CREATIVE ASIAN (East Café) offers authentic Hong Kong-style Chinese buffet Jan. 27-29. Diners will have a selection of genuine Chinese fare—from dim sum delicacies such as Crystal Prawn dumplings and East's signature Fried Prawn Wanton to buffet-exclusive items Mapo Tofu, Steamed Chicken with Black Mushroom and, the all-time favorite, Pork Belly in Aromatic Soy and Steamed Fish with Chinese Ham Orange Soy. Call 8120233.

MANILA Pavilion Hotel presents the Dimsum Festival featuring a selection of traditional Chinese cuisine. The menu consists of Pork Dumplings with Black Mushrooms, Steamed Asado Buns, Porridge with Pork and Century Eggs, Deep-fried Salad Prawns, Glutinous Rice Wrapped in Lotus Leaf, Steamed Chicken Feet with Black Beans, Deep-fried Sesame Balls, Deep-fried Taro Puffs, Pan-fried Radish Cake, Deep-fried Sesame Prawn Rolls, Steamed Spareribs with Plum Sauce, Steamed Scallop Dumplings, Steamed Fried Fish Balls, Steamed Crystal Prawn Dumplings, Coffee Pudding and Honeydew Tapioca. The Dimsum Festival is open for lunch and dinner until Jan. 29. Call 5261212 local 2303.

CROWNE PLAZA Galleria Manila's Xin Tian Di offers the traditional Yu Sheng to mark the new lunar year. Yu Sheng is a fish-meat platter combined with an assortment of ingredients like shredded lettuce, carrots, turnips, red and yellow ginger, pickled onions, jellyfish and sun-dried plums. This New Year's feast starter is prepared and served with sour-sweet sauce made from vinegar, plum sauce, salt, sugar and salad oil. Yu Sheng Platter is available for lunch, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., and dinner, 6-10:30 p.m., until Feb. 16. Call 6337222 local 7240.

THE PENINSULA Manila's Nielsen's Restaurant offers Chinese Sunday brunch, 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Jan. 29. Diners can choose from all sorts of "lucky" dishes symbolic of happiness, prosperity and good fortune. Call 8872888 local 2951.

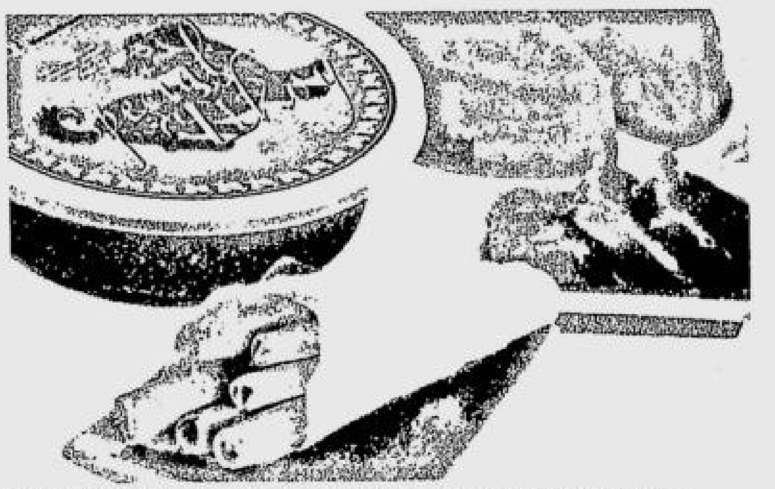
HYATT Hotel and Casino's Fireplace offers a taste of Australia, Jan. 26-Feb. 9. To be showcased are Australia's renowned outdoor dishes including Grain-Fed Beef Roast and Pepper Berry-Marinated Lamb Cutlets. Diners can also enjoy the finest selection of King Island cheese specialties with a variety of premium wines from around Australia. Call 2451234.

THE CENTURY Park Hotel offers New Year rice cakes and chocolates, until Jan. 31, at the Deli Snack booth, Atrium Lobby. A special Chinese New Year Buffet will be available on Jan. 28 (lunch) and Jan. 29 (lunch and dinner) at Café in the Park. Call 5285814/16.

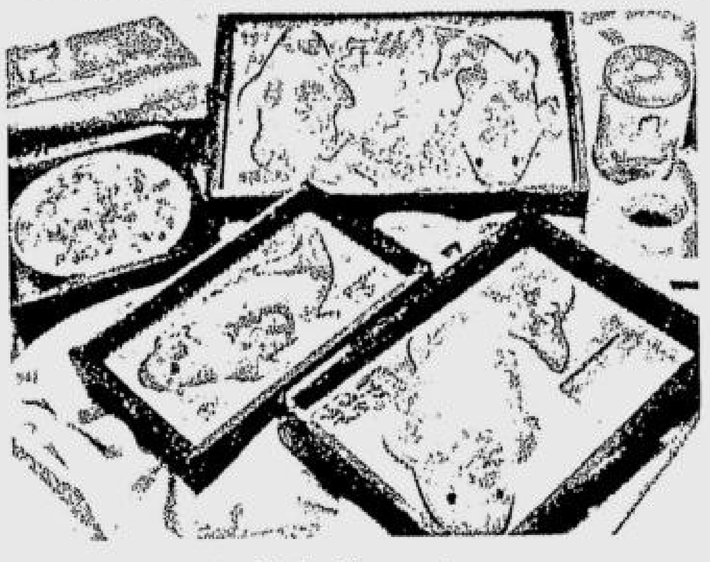
SUPER BOWL of China is giving away lucky gold representation *tael* bars to mark Chinese New Year. Feng shui experts say the *tael* gold bar is a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

A minimum purchase of P750 (dine-in or takeout), until Feb. 4, entitles diners to a boat-shaped gold representation of *tael* blessed by Buddhist monks for a wealthier and more prosperous life. Super Bowl of China Restaurants are located at Glorietta 4; Jupiter St., Makati City; Festival Mall, Alabang; SM City North Edsa; SM Megamall; SM City Fairview; Promenade, Greenhills; SM San Lazaro; Blue Wave, Marikina; Eastwood City Walk, Libis; Tomas Morato, QC, and at the Gateway Mall, Araneta Center. Also visit Big Buddha Restaurants in Greenbelt 3 and Blue Wave, Macapagal Avenue.

CRUSTASIA offers Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese dishes like the Deep-fried Sesame Crab. The restaurant has branches at the G/F Powerplant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati, and 3/L, The Podium, Ortigas. Call 7285463 or 6313857.



LUK YUEN Noodle House offers three special *tikoy* treats: *tikoy* wrapped in coco jam dip, P45; *tikoy* squares, P45; and whole *tikoy*, P136. Luk Yuen Noodle House has branches at Glorietta 2, Cash & Carry (near Buendia, Makati), Alabang Town Center, Greenhills Shopping Center, and SM Megamall.



Special 'tikoy' promo

SHANGHAI BISTRO CELEbrates Chinese New Year with a special promo of *tikoy* and tea. *Tikoy* varieties available include a Single Big Fish Tikoy, P488 a box; Single Medium Fish Tikoy, P388 a box; Double Happiness Fish Tikoy, P688 a box; and Radish Cake, P288 a box. For every purchase of five boxes of *tikoy*, customers get a free can of Shanghai Bistro tea.

Call 8928870/8872 (Makati) and 6877103/1861 (QC). Shanghai Bistro is at 3/L of Paseo Center, Makati, and Eastwood City Walk 2 in Quezon City.

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ACPAPP

Association of Certified Public Accountants in Public Practice

STRONGER AT 25

Driving Professional Excellence

New set of officers and directors announced

THE ASSOCIATION OF CPAS IN PUBLIC Practice (ACPAPP) announces its roster of officers and board of directors with Jerome B. Constantino as the silver year president.

Official induction will be held at New World Renaissance Hotel today at 7 p.m. The theme for this year is "Stronger at 25: Driving Professional Excellence".

The chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Atty. Fe B. Barin will be the inducting officer and keynote speaker. She will lead tonight's gathering of top accounting and auditing firms in public practice nationwide.

Now on it's 25th year, ACPAPP continues its vision in advancing the professional development of its member, promote high professional and ethical standards and assume a strong advocacy role in protecting the interest of CPAs in public accounting practice and the general public who uses the financial statements.

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Rationale of the theme

THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION TODAY IS EXPERIENCING SIGNIFICANT TRANSFORMATION THAT requires new competencies, new services and new skills in the advent of emerging global markets, advances in technology and new standards and regulations. There is increased competition locally and internationally.

Now, in its 25th year, ACPAPP is stronger and driven more than ever to achieve professional excellence as it places a strong focus on the quality of training requirements and continuing education of practicing CPAs that are relevant to today's market. Along with its role in professional development, ACPAPP constantly support our local regulators and standard setting bodies in implementing changes to improve transparency and corporate governance in the business sector. More importantly, we continue to uphold our adherence to the highest ethical standards and professional excellence with a deep sense of integrity and social responsibility for the benefit of our profession as well as the business sector and our nation as a whole.

Our Mission and Vision

ACPAPP AS AN ORGANIZATION AIMS TO CONSOLIDATE THE RANKS OF ALL CPAS IN PUBLIC PRACTICE, enhance their professional competencies and promote strict adherence to the profession's Code of Ethics.

It is ACPAPP's vision to see all Filipino CPAs in public accounting practice elevate to highly esteemed professionals, competently and excellently performing its assigned tasks in the world of business and governance.

To realize this vision, ACPAPP shall strengthen its linkages with all regulatory agencies of the government, strengthen its advocacy role and come-up with activities that will solidly unite its members and develop their technical and professional competencies.

How to join ACPAPP

AS AN ACPAPP MEMBER, YOU ARE ENTItled to the following benefits:

1. Technical updates via seminars and workshops on the following area:
    a. Philippine Financial Reporting Standards and Philippine Accounting Standards (PFRS and PAS).
    b. Philippine Standards of Auditing (PSA)
    c. Information on recent Rules and Regulations of the BIR, SEC, BSP-Monetary Board, BOC, BOI, PEZA and other government agencies.

2. Monthly ACPAPP Bulletin / Newsletter

3. Access to ACPAPP website.

4. Assistance by way of informal consultation regarding accounting, auditing, tax and other governance issues

Interested parties may contact the ACPAPP Secretariat at phone numbers (02) 753-4027; 753-4028; 753-4089 or e-mail us at acpapp2003@yahoo.com. You may also visit us at Unit 2308 Cityland 10 Tower 1, HV Dela Costa corner Ayala Avenue North, Makati City.

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Messages

Our most cordial greetings to the Association of Certified Public Accountants in Public Practice (ACPAPP) as you celebrate your Silver Anniversary and induct your new set of board of directors, board of trustees of ACPAPP Foundation, and officers for 2006.

Certified Public Accountants build bridges of communication and credibility with various stakeholders. Whether they compile and analyze financial and non-financial data for management or attesting to financial statements as an independent auditor, CPAs are focused on ensuring that a timely flow of accurate information gets to decision makers. Your work provides a reality check before your clients - be individuals - make important economic and investment decisions.

We at the Securities and Exchange Commission are therefore gratified to know that on your 25th year, the drive toward professional excellence is still a continuing pursuit. This is a spirit that allows for current and future performance being surpassed by what has been achieved, performance that defies old limits and charts new territory. An ACPAPP that is better tomorrow than it was yesterday!

Congratulations.

FE B. BARIN
Chairperson

To President Tonton Constantino and his Team:

On behalf of the 2005 Board of Directors and Officers of ACPAPP, I wish to extend our Congratulations to all of you. We believe that 2006 will be another banner year for ACPAPP as you address the burning issues of the day and move forward with all the plans and projects of the Association .

This year is particularly important as we celebrate our 25 years of service to the membership and the CPA profession. ACPAPP is indeed Stronger and Driven more than ever, to achieve Professional Excellence.

Again, our best wishes and congratulations!!!

GREG NAVARRO
Immediate Past President

This being the 25th Silver Year Anniversary of the Association of CPA's in Public Practice (ACPAPP), I extend with sincerity, my congratulations and best wishes to the Association and to the new 2006 "Silver Year" Officers and Board of Directors.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the significant accomplishments of the Past Presidents and Leaders of ACPAPP. I personally salute them, the "Pillars of ACPAPP," who elevated our Organization to the height of success it has achieved today. They are not only triumphant in their respective careers, but have also dedicated their leadership in promoting professional excellence and improving our competencies as Filipino CPA's in Public Accounting Practice. As I bear the torch of leadership in 2006, I pledge to bestow only my very best to this endeavor.

In our Silver Year, our chosen theme is "Stronger at 25: Driving Professional Excellence." This places a strong emphasis in our commitment to professional excellence and adherence to the highest ethical standards, particularly in today's environment.

The advent of new business trends, emerging global markets, advances in technology and new accounting and auditing standards all pose challenges to the practice of our profession today. These require new competencies, new services and new skills. Now more than ever, should we place a strong focus on the quality of continuing professional education and develop training requirements of Filipino Practicing CPA's that are relevant to the needs of today's markets.

Now, in its 25th year, ACPAPP continuously fulfill its commitment to enhance experience among Filipino CPA's. Along with its role on professional development, ACPAPP constantly support our local regulators and standard setting authorities in implementing changes to improve transparency and corporate governance in the business sector. In driving professional excellence and adherence to ethical standards, ultimately, our profession fully benefits, as well as the business sector and our Nation as a whole.

We are faced with profound challenges to this, our Silver Year, but with the enthusiastic and continued support of our Officers and Board of Directors and the entire membership, I am confident that we can meet these challenges and convert them into more positive opportunities.

On behalf of the Silver Year Officers and Board of Directors of ACPAPP, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratefulness for your valuable, never ending support and active participation in the success of our organization.

JEROME ANTONIO B. CONSTANTINO
President – Silver Year 2006

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1981-1982
Luis C. Diaz

1983-1984
Antonio A.S. Valdes

1985
Lucito L. Sioson

1986
Leonardo L. Cabañero

1987
Joaquin P. Tolentino

1988-1989
Eliseo A. Fernandez

1990
Carlito B. Dimar

1991-1992
Romeo C. Alba

1993
Petronilo S. Santos

1994
Roberto G. Manabat

1995
Lorenzo G. Corpuz

1996-1997
Pascasio S. Banaria

1998-1999
Benjamin R. Punongbayan

2000
Nestorio C. Roraldo

2001
Jerry S. Isla

2002
Rosario Bernardo

2003
Jaime C. Laya

2004
Ramon F. Garcia

2005
Gregorio S. Navarro

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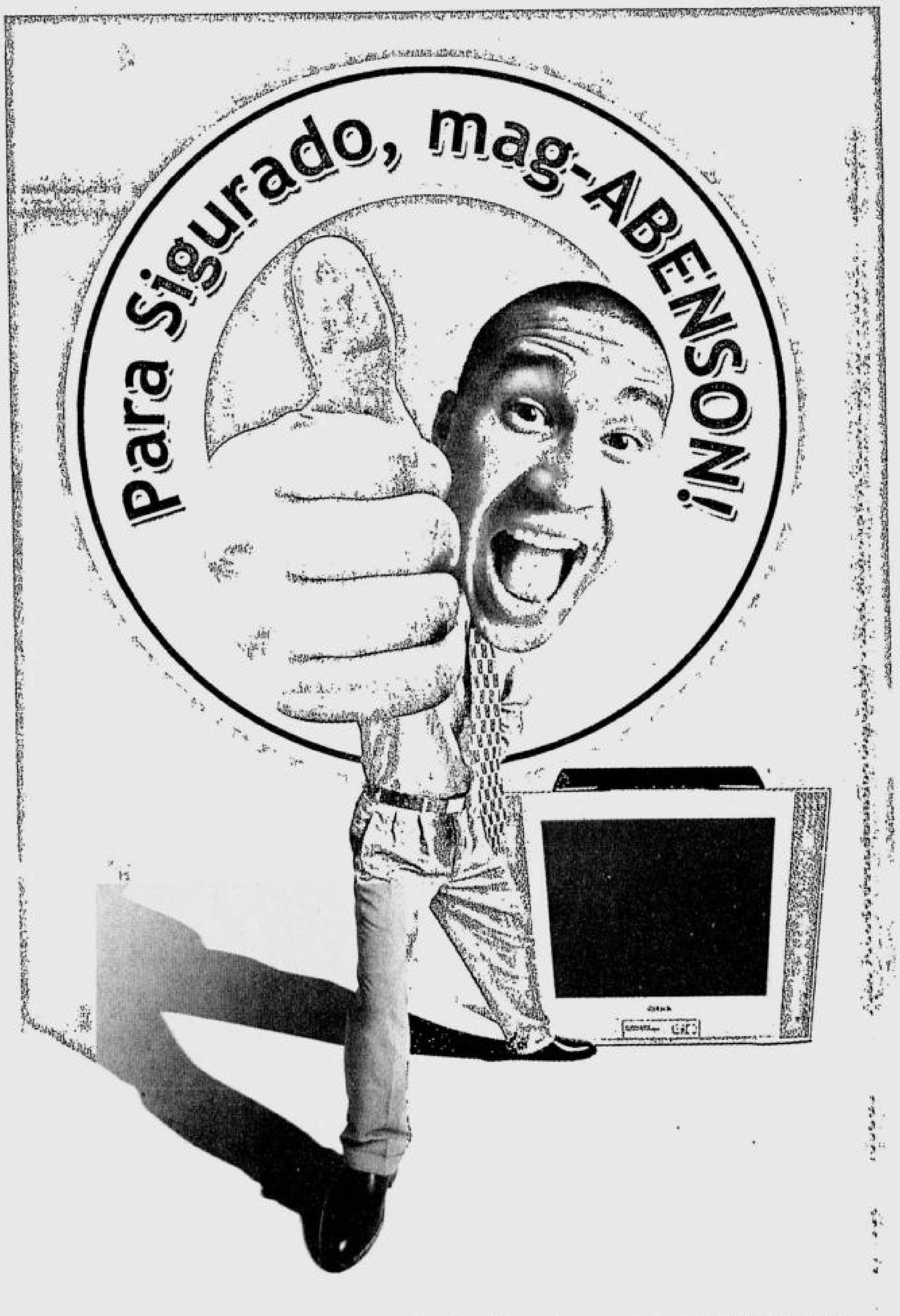
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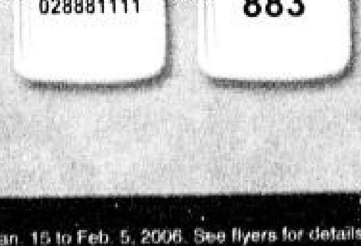

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